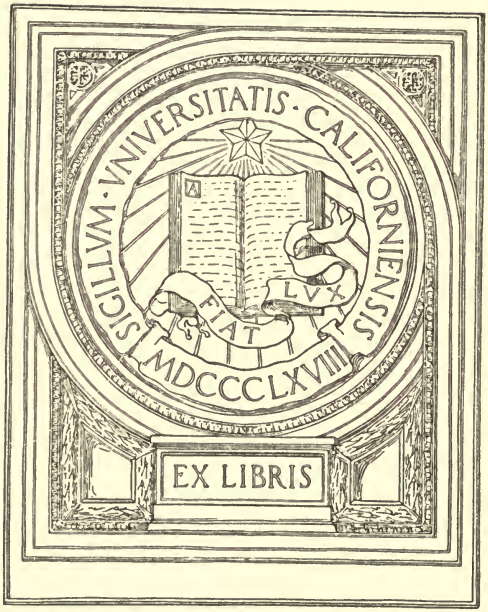
A TROOPER GALAHAD

Captain Charles King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"Felling him like an ox."

Page 107.

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BY

CAPTAIN CHARLES KING, U.S.A.

AUTHOR OF

"THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER," "MARION'S FAITH," "CAPTAIN BLAKE,"
"UNDER FIRE," "FROM SCHOOL TO BATTLE-FIELD," ETC.

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TO WIN
AMMONIA

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A TROOPER GALAHAD

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CHAPTER I.

"Life is full of ups and downs," mused the colonel, as he laid on the littered desk before him an official communication just received from Department Head-Quarters, "especially army life,—and more especially army life in Texas."

"Now, what are you philosophizing about?" asked his second in command, a burly major, glancing over the top of the latest home paper, three weeks old that day.

"D'ye remember Pigott, that little cad that was court-martialled at San Antonio in '68 for quintuplicating his pay accounts? He married the widow of old Alamo Hendrix that winter. He's worth half a million to-day, is running for Congress, and will probably be on the military committee next year, while here's Lawrence, who was judge advocate of the court that tried him, gone all to smash." And the veteran officer commanding the —th Infantry and the big post at Fort Worth glanced warily along into the adjoin-

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ing office, where a clerk was assorting the papers on the adjutant's desk.

"It's the saddest case I ever heard of," said Major Brooks, tossing aside the *Toledo Blade* and tripping up over his own, which he had thoughtfully propped between his legs as he took his seat and thoughtlessly ignored as he left it. "Damn that sabre,—and the service generally!" he growled, as he recovered his balance and tramped to the window. "I'd almost be willing to quit it as Pigott did if I could see my way to a moderate competence anywhere out of it. Lawrence was as good a soldier as we had in the 12th, and, yet, what can you do or say? The mischief's done." And, beating the devil's tattoo on the window, the major stood gloomily gazing out over the parade.

"It isn't Lawrence himself I'm so—— Orderly, shut that door!" cried the chief, whirling around in his chair, "and tell those clerks I want it kept shut until the adjutant comes; and you stay out on the porch.—It isn't Lawrence I'm so sorely troubled about, Brooks. He has ability, and could pick up and do well eventually, but he's utterly discouraged and swamped. What's to become, though, of that poor child Ada and his little boy?"

"God knows," said Brooks, sadly. "I've got

five of my own to look after, and you've got four. No use talking of adopting them, even if Lawrence would listen; and he never would listen to anything or anybody—they tell me," he added, after a minute's reflection. "I don't know it myself. It's what Buxton and Canker and some of those fellows told me on the Republican last summer. I hadn't seen him since Gettysburg until we met here."

"Buxton and Canker be—exterminated!" said the colonel, hotly. "I never met Buxton, and never want to. As for Canker, by gad, there's another absurdity. They put him in the cavalry because consolidation left no room for him with us. What do you suppose they'll do with him in the —th?"

"The Lord knows, as I said before. He never rode anything but a hobby in his life. I don't wonder Lawrence couldn't tolerate preaching from him. But what I don't understand is, who made the allegation. What's his offence? Every one knows that he's in debt and trouble, and that he's had hard lines and nothing else ever since the war, but the court acquitted him of all blame in that money business——"

"And now to make room for fellows with friends at court," burst in the colonel, wrathfully, "he and other poor devils with nothing but a

fighting record and a family to provide for are turned loose on a year's pay, which they're to have after things straighten out as to their accounts with the government. Now just look at Lawrence! Ordnance and quartermaster's stores hopelessly boggled——"

"Hush!" interrupted Brooks, starting back from the window. "Here he is now."

Assembly of the guard details had sounded a few moments before, and all over the sunshiny parade on its westward side, in front of the various barracks, little squads of soldiers armed and in full uniform were standing awaiting the next signal, while the porches of the low wooden buildings beyond were dotted with groups of comrades, lazily looking on. Out on the greensward, broad and level, crisscrossed with gravel walks, the band had taken its station, marshalled by the tall drum-major in his huge bear-skin shako. From the lofty flag-staff in the centre of the parade the national colors were fluttering in the mountain breeze that stole down from the snowy peaks hemming the view to the northwest and stirred the leaves of the cottonwoods and the drooping branches of the willows in the bed of the rushing stream sweeping by the southern limits of the garrison. Within the enclosure, sacred to military use, it was all the same old

familiar picture, the stereotyped fashion of the frontier fort of the earliest '70s,—dull-hued barracks on one side or on two, dull-hued, broad-porched cottages—the officers' quarters—on another, dull-hued offices, storehouses, corral walls, scattered about the outskirts, a dull-hued, sombre earth on every side; sombre sweeping prairie beyond, spanned by pallid sky or snow-tipped mountains; a twisting, winding road or two, entering the post on one front, issuing at the other, and tapering off in sinuous curves until lost in the distance; a few scattered ranches in the stream valley; a collection of sheds, shanties, and hovels surrounding a bustling establishment known as the store, down by the ford,—the centre of civilization, apparently, for thither trended every roadway, path, track, or trail visible to the naked eye. Here in front of the office a solitary cavalry horse was tethered. Yonder at the sutler's, early as it was in the day, a dozen quadrupeds, mules, mustangs, or Indian ponies, were blinking in the sunshine. Dogs innumerable sprawled in the sand. Bipeds lolled lazily about or squatted on the steps on the edge of the wooden porch, some in broad sombreros, some in scalp-lock and blanket,—none in the garb of civil life as seen in the nearest cities, and the nearest was four or five hundred miles away.

Out on the parade were bits of lively color, the dresses of frolicsome children to the east, the stripes and facings of the cavalry and artillery at the west; for, by some odd freak of the fortunes of war, here, away out at Fort Worth, had come a crack light battery of the old army, which, with Brooks's battalion of the cavalry, and head-quarters' staff, band, and six companies of the —th Infantry, made up the garrison,—the biggest then maintained in the Department immortalized by Sheridan as only second choice to Sheol. It was the winter of '70 and '71, as black and dreary a time as ever the army knew, for Congress had telescoped forty-five regiments into half the number and blasted all hopes of promotion,—about the only thing the soldier has to live for.

And that wasn't the blackest thing about the business, by any means. The war had developed the fact that we had thousands of battalion commanders for whom the nation had no place in peace times, and scores of them, in the hope and promise of a life employment in an honorable profession, accepted the tender of lieutenancies in the regular army in '66, the war having broken up all their vocations at home, and now, having given four years more to the military service,—taken all those years out of their lives that might have been given to establishing themselves in

business,—they were bidden to choose between voluntarily quitting the army with a bonus of a year's pay, and remaining with no hope of advancement. Most of them, despairing of finding employment in civil life, concluded to stay: so other methods of getting rid of them were devised, and, to the amaze of the army and the dismay of the victims, a big list was published of officers "rendered supernumerary" and summarily discharged. And this was how it happened that a gallant, brilliant, and glad-hearted fellow, the favorite staff officer of a glorious corps commander who fell at the head of his men after three years of equally glorious service, found himself in far-away Texas this blackest of black Fridays, suddenly turned loose on the world and without hope or home.

Cruel was no word for it. Entering the army before the war, one of the few gifted civilians commissioned because they loved the service and then had friends to back them, Edgar Lawrence had joined the cavalry in Texas, where the first thing he did was to fall heels over head in love with his captain's daughter, and a runaway match resulted. Poor Kitty Tyrrell! Poor Ned Lawrence! Two more unpractical people never lived. She was an army girl with aspirations, much sweetness, and little sense. He was a whole-

souled, generous, lavish fellow. Both were extravagant, she particularly so. They were sorely in debt when the war broke out, and he, instead of going in for the volunteers, was induced to become aide-de-camp to his old colonel, who passed him on to another when he retired; and when the war was half over Lawrence was only a captain of staff, and captain he came out at the close. Brevets of course he had, but what are brevets but empty title? What profiteth it a man to be called colonel if he have only the pay of a sub? Hundreds of men who eagerly sought his aid or influence during the war "held over him" at the end of it. Another general took him on his staff as aide-de-camp, where Lawrence was invaluable. Kitty dearly loved city life, parties, balls, operas, and theatres; but Lawrence grew lined and gray with care and worry. The general went the way of all flesh, and Lawrence to Texas, unable to get another staff billet. They set him at court-martial duty at San Antonio for several months, for Texas furnished culprits by the score in the days that followed the war, and many an unpromising army career was cut short by the tribunal of which Captain and Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence was judge advocate; but all the time he had a skeleton in his own closet that by and by rattled its way out. Time was in the war days

when many of the men of the head-quarters escort banked their money with the beloved and popular aide. He had nearly twelve hundred dollars when the long columns probed the Wilderness in '64. It was still with him when he was suddenly sent back to Washington with the body of his beloved chief, but every cent was gone before he got there, stolen from him on the steamer from Acquia Creek, and never a trace was found of it thereafter. For years he was paying that off, making it good in driblets, but while he was serving faithfully in Texas, commanding a scout that took him miles and miles away over the Llano Estacado, there were inimical souls who worked the story of his indebtedness to enlisted men for all it was worth, and, aided by the complaints of some of their number, to his grievous disadvantage. He came home from a brilliant dash after the Kiowas to find himself complimented in orders and confronted by charges in one and the same breath. The court acquitted him of the charges and "cut" his accusers, but the shame and humiliation of it all seemed to prey upon his spirits; and then Kitty Tyrrell died.

"If that had only happened years before," said the colonel, "it would have been far better for Lawrence, for she conscientiously believed her-

self the best wife in the world, and spent every cent of his income in dressing up to her conception of the character." Once the most dashing and debonair of captains, poor Ned ran down at the heel and seemed unable to rally. New commanders came to the department, to his regiment, and new officials to the War Office,—men "who knew not Joseph;" and when the drag-net was cast into the whirlpool of army names and army reputations, it was set for scandal, not for services, and the old story of those unpaid hundreds was enmeshed and served up seasoned with the latest spice obtainable from the dealers rebuked of that original court. And, lo! when the list of victims reached Fort Worth in the reorganization days, old Frazier, the colonel, burst into a string of anathemas, and more than one good woman into a passion of tears, for poor Ned Lawrence, at that moment long days' marches away towards the Rio Bravo, was declared supernumerary and mustered out of the service of the United States with one year's pay,—pay which he could not hope to get until every government account was satisfactorily straightened, and this, too, at a time when the desertion of one sergeant and the death of another revealed the fact that his storehouses had been systematically robbed and that he was hopelessly short in many a costly item charged against

him. That heartless order was a month old when the stricken soldier reached his post, and then and there for the first time learned his fate.

Yes, they had tried to break it to him. Letters full of sympathy were written and sent by couriers far to the north; others took them on the Concho trail. Brooks and Frazier both wrote to San Antonio messages thence to be wired to Washington imploring reconsideration; but the deed was done. Astute advisers of the War Secretary clinched the matter by the prompt renomination of others to fill the vacancies just created, and once these were confirmed by the Senate there could be no appeal. The detachment led by Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence, so later said the Texas papers, had covered itself with glory, but in its pursuit of the fleeing Indians it had gone far to the northeast and so came home by a route no man had dreamed of, and Lawrence, spurring eagerly ahead, rode in at night to fold his motherless little ones to his heart, and found loving army women aiding their faithful old nurse in ministering to them, but read disaster in the tearful eyes and faltering words that welcomed him.

Then he was ill a fortnight, and then he had to go. He could not, would not believe the order final. He clung to the hope that he would find at Washington a dozen men who knew his war

record, who could remember his gallant services in a dozen battles, his popularity and prominence in the Army of the Potomac. Everybody knows the favorite aide-de-camp of a corps commander when colonels go begging for recognition, and everybody has a cheery, cordial word for him so long as he and his general live and serve together. But that proves nothing when the general is gone. Colonels who eagerly welcomed and shook hands with the aide-de-camp and talked confidentially with him about other colonels in days when he rode long hours by his general's side, later passed him by with scant notice, and "always thought him a much overrated man." Right here at Fort Worth were fellows who, six or seven years before, would have given a month's pay to win Ned Lawrence's influence in their behalf,—for, like "Perfect" Bliss of the Mexican war days, Lawrence was believed to write his general's despatches and reports,—but who now shrank uneasily out of his way for fear that he should ask a favor.

Even Brooks, who liked and had spoken for him, drew back from the window when with slow, heavy steps the sad-faced, haggard man came slowly along the porch. The orderly sprang up and stood at salute just as adjutant's call sounded, and the band pealed forth its merry, spirited

music. For a moment the new-comer turned and glanced back over the parade, now dotted with little details all marching out to the line where stood the sergeant-major; then he turned, entered the building, and paused with hopeless eyes and pallid, careworn features at the office doorway. His old single-breasted captain's frock-coat, with its tarnished silver leaves at the shoulders, hung loosely about his shrunken form. The trousers, with their narrow welt of yellow at the seam, looked far too big for him. His forage-cap, still natty in shape, was old and worn. His chin and cheeks bristled with a stubbly grayish beard. All the old alert manner was gone. The once bright eyes were bleary and dull. Neighbors said that poor Ned had been drinking deep of the contents of a demijohn a sympathetic soul had sent him, and half an eye could tell that his lip was tremulous. The colonel arose and held out his hand.

"Come in, Lawrence, old fellow, and tell me what I can do for you." He spoke kindly, and Brooks, too, turned towards the desolate man.

"You've done—all you could—both of you. God bless you!" was the faltering answer. "I've come to say I start at once. I'm going right to Washington to have this straightened out. I want to thank you, colonel, and you too, Brooks,

for all your willing help. I'll try to show my appreciation of it when I get back."

"But Ada and little Jim, Lawrence; surely they're not ready for that long journey yet," said Frazier, thinking sorrowfully of what his wife had told him only the day before,—that they had no decent winter clothing to their names.

"It's all right. Old Mammy stays right here with them. She has taken care of them, you know, ever since my poor wife died. I can keep my old quarters a month, can't I?" he queried, with a quivering smile. "Even if the order isn't revoked, it would be a month or more before any one could come to take my place. Mrs. Blythe will look after the children day and night."

Frazier turned appealingly to Brooks, who shook his head and refused to speak, and so the colonel had to.

"Lawrence, God knows I hate to say one word of discouragement, but I fear—I fear you'd better wait till next week's stage and take those poor little folks with you. I've watched this thing. I know how a dozen good fellows, confident as yourself, have gone on to Washington and found it all useless."

"It can't be useless, sir," burst in the captain, impetuously. "Truth is truth and must prevail. If after all my years of service I can find no

friends in the War Office, then life is a lie and a sham. Senator Hall writes me that he will leave no stone unturned. No, colonel, I take the stage at noon to-day. Will you let Winn ride with me as far as Castle Peak? I've got to run down and see Fuller now."

"Winn can go with you, certainly; but indeed, Lawrence, I shall have to see you again about this."

"I'll stop on the way back," said Lawrence, nervously. "Fuller promised to see me before he went out to his ranch." And hastily the captain turned away.

For a moment the two seniors stood there silently gazing into each other's eyes. "What can one do or say?" asked the colonel, at last. "I suppose Fuller is going to let him have money for the trip. He can afford to, God knows, after all he's made out of this garrison. But the question is, ought I not to make poor Lawrence understand that it's a gone case? He is legally out already. His successor is on his way here. I got the letter this morning."

"On his way here? Who is he?" queried the major, in sudden interest. "They didn't know when Stone came through San Antonio ten days ago."

"Man named Barclay; just got his captaincy

in the 30th,—but was consolidated out of that, of course."

"Barclay—Barclay, you say?" ejaculated the major, in excitement. "Well, of all the——"

"Of all the what?" demanded the colonel, impatiently. "Nothing wrong with him, I hope."

"Wrong? No, or they wouldn't have dubbed him Galahad. But, talk about ups and downs in Texas, this beats all. Does Winn know?"

"I don't know that any one knows but you and me," answered the veteran, half testily. "What's amiss? What has Winn to do with it?"

"Blood and blue blazes! Why, of course you couldn't know. Three years ago Barclay believed himself engaged to a girl, and she threw him over for Winn, and now we'll have all three of them right here at Worth."

CHAPTER II.

In spite of what Colonel Frazier could say, Captain Lawrence had gone the long and devious journey to Washington. Those were the days when the lumbering stage-coach once a week, or a rattling ambulance, bore our army travellers from the far frontier to San Antonio. Another trundled and bumped them away to the Gulf. A Morgan Line steamer picked them up and tossed and rolled with them to the mouth of the Mississippi and unloaded them at New Orleans, whence by dusty railway journey of forty-eight hours or more they could hope to reach the North. The parting between Lawrence and his tall slip of a daughter and boisterous little Jimmy was something women wept over in telling or hearing, for only two looked on, well-nigh blinded,—Mrs. Blythe, who had been devoted to their mother, and old "Mammy," who was devoted to them all. A month had rolled by, and the letters that came from Lawrence from San Antonio and Indianola and New Orleans had been read by sympathizing friends to the children. Then all awaited the news from Washington. Every one knew he

would wire to Department Head-Quarters the moment the case was settled in his favor; but the days went by without other tidings, and the croakers who had predicted ill success were mournfully happy. February passed, March was ushered in; orders came transferring certain portions of Frazier's big command, and certain new officers began to arrive to fill the three or four vacancies existing, but the new captain of Troop "D" of the cavalry had not yet appeared. His fame, however, had preceded him, and all Fort Worth was agog to meet him. Brooks knew but a modest bit of his story, and what he knew he kept from every man but Frazier, yet had had to tell his wife. The Winns were silent on the subject. Winn himself was a man of few intimates, —a young first lieutenant of cavalry,—and the tie that bound him to Lawrence was the fact that he and Kitty Tyrrell were first-cousins, their mothers sisters, and Winn, a tall, athletic, slender fellow, frank, buoyant, handsome, and connected with some of the best names in the old army, was one of the swells of his class at the Point and the beau among all the young officers the summer of his graduation,—the summer that Laura Waite, engaged to Brevet Captain Galbraith Barclay of the Infantry, came from the West to visit relatives at that enchanting spot, spent just six weeks

there, and, after writing letters all one month to close her absent lover's eyes, wound up by writing one that opened them. She was a beautiful girl then; she was a lovely-looking woman now, but the bloom was gone. The brilliant eyes were often clouded, for Harry Winn was "his aunt Kitty all over," said many a man who knew them both. Their name was impecuniosity. That Mrs. Winn could tell much about the coming captain letters from other regiments informed more than one bright woman at Worth; but that the young matron would tell next to nothing, more than one woman, bright or blundering, discovered on inquiry. Only one officer now at the post had ever served with Barclay, and that was Brooks, who became tongue-tied so soon as it was settled beyond peradventure that Captain Galbraith Barclay from the unassigned list had been gazetted to the 12th Cavalry, Troop "D," *vice* Lawrence, honorably discharged. But Brooks had letters, so had Frazier, from old officers who had served with the transferred man. Some of these letters referred to him in terms of admiration, while another spoke of him unhesitatingly as "more kinds of a damned fool" than the writer had ever met. Verily, various men have various minds.

Presently, however, there came a man who

could tell lots about Barclay, whether he knew anything or not, and that was one of the new transfers, Lieutenant Hodge by title and name. Hodge said he had served with the 30th along the Union Pacific, and had met Barclay often. In his original regiment Mr. Hodge had been regarded as a very monotonous sort of man, a fellow who bored his hearers to death, and the contrast between his reception in social circles in the regiment he had left, and that accorded him here at Worth so soon as it was learned that he knew Barclay, inspired Mr. Hodge to say that *these* people were worth knowing; they had some life and intelligence about them. The gang he had left in Wyoming were a stupid lot of owls by comparison. For a week Hodge was invited to dinner by family after family, and people dropped in to spend the evening where he happened to be, for Hodge held the floor and talked for hours about Barclay, and what he had to tell was interesting indeed; so much so, said Brooks, that some of it was probably a preposterous lie. To begin with, said Hodge, Captain Barclay was rich, very rich, fabulously rich, perhaps; nobody knew how rich, and nobody would have known he was rich at all, judging from the simplicity and strict economy of his life. In fact, it was this simplicity and strict economy that had given rise to the belief

that existed for a year or two after he joined the 30th that he was hampered either with debts or with dependent relatives. Relatives they knew he had, because sisters sent their boys to visit him at Sanders, and he took them hunting, fishing, etc.; from these ingenuous nephews the ladies learned of others, nephews, nieces, sisters, cousins, aunts, who wrote long letters to Uncle Gal, and the mail orderly said he left more letters at Captain Barclay's quarters than at anybody's else. So Fort Sanders dropped the theory of debts and adopted that of dependants, and that held good for the first year of his service with them. He had joined from the volunteers, where he had risen to the grade of major. He was "pious," said Hodge,—wouldn't drink, smoke, chew, play cards, or swear,—thought they ought to have services on Sunday. He left the roistering bachelors' mess soon after his reaching the post, and had ever since kept house, his cook and housemaid being one old darky whom he had "accumulated" in the South during the war,—a darky who had been well-taught in the household of his old master, and who became extravagantly attached to the new. Hannibal could cook, wait at table, and tend door to perfection, but he had to learn the duties of second girl when his master joined the 30th in far Wyoming, and that was the only time a

breach was threatened. Hannibal's dignity was hurt. He had been body-servant in the ante-bellum days, butler, cook, coachman, and hostler, but had never done such chores as Marse Barclay told him would fall to his lot when that reticent officer set up his modest establishment. Hannibal sulked three days, and even talked of leaving. The lieutenant counted out a goodly sum, all Hannibal's own, and told him that he would find the balance banked in his name in the distant East whenever he chose to quit; then Hannibal broke down, and was speedily broken in. All this had Hodge heard when the dames of Sanders and those of Steele or Russell were comparing notes and picnicking together along that then new wonder of the world, the Union Pacific. But all this was only preliminary to what came later.

Little detachments, horse and foot, were scattered all over the line of the brand-new railway while it was being built; every now and then the Indians jumped their camps and working-parties, and in the late fall of '67 Barclay had a stiff and plucky fight with a band of Sioux; he was severely wounded, but beat them off, and was sent East to recuperate. Now came particulars Hodge could not give, but that letters could and did. It was while Barclay was convalescing at Omaha Barracks that he met Miss Laura Waite,—a

beautiful girl and a garrison belle. She was ten years his junior. This was her first winter in army society. She had spent her girl years at school, and now was having "simply a heavenly time," if her letters could be believed. Her father was a field officer of cavalry with rather a solemn way of looking at life, and her mother was said to be the explanation of much of his solemnity,—she being as volatile as he was staid. She too had been a beauty, and believed that beauty a permanent fixture. But Laura was fresh and fair, sweet and winsome, light-hearted and joyous, and the father for a time took more pride in her than he did in his sons. Major Waite was in command of the cantonment from which the relief party was sent when the news came that Barclay and his little detachment were "corralled." Major Waite became enthusiastic over the details of the cool, courageous, brainy defence made by the young officer against tremendous odds, covered him with all manner of thoughtful care and attention when he was brought into the cantonment, then, when the winter soon set in and the camp broke up, and Waite went back to Omaha Barracks, he took Barclay with him to his house instead of the hospital, and the rest followed as the night the day.

Barclay spent a month under the major's roof,

won his esteem and friendship, but left his heart in the daughter's hands. If ever a man devotedly loved a beautiful, winsome young girl, that man was Galbraith Barclay; if ever a girl's father approved of a man, that man was Barclay; and if ever a man had reason to hope that his suit would win favor in a father's eyes, that man was Barclay; yet it did not. Major Waite's reply to the modest yet most manful plea of Lieutenant Barclay to be permitted to pay his addresses to the major's daughter surprised every one to whom Mrs. Waite confided it, and they were not few. The old soldier begged of the younger not to think of it, at least just yet. But when it transpired that the younger had been most seriously thinking of it and could think of nothing else, then the major changed his tune and told him what he did not tell his wife; and that only became known through the father's own intemperate language long months after. He told Barclay he knew no man to whom he would rather intrust his daughter's happiness, but he feared, he believed, she was still too young to know her own mind, too young to see in Barclay what he saw, and he urged that the young officer should wait. But Barclay knew *his* own mind. He was able, he said, to provide for her in comfort either in or out of the army, which few pos-

sible aspirants could say. He would listen to no demur, and then at last the father said, "Try your fate if you will, but let there be no thought of marriage before she is twenty,—before she can have had opportunity of seeing something of the world and of other men,—not these young whippersnappers just joining us here."

It was a surprise to him that Laura should accept Mr. Barclay. She came to him, her father, all happy smiles and tears and blushes, and told him how proud and glad a girl she was, because she thought her lover the best and noblest man she ever dreamed of except her own dear old dad. For a time Waite took heart and hoped for the best, and believed her and her mother, as indeed they believed themselves; and when Barclay went back to Sanders at the end of January he was a very happy man, and Laura for a week a very lonely girl. Then youth, health, elasticity, vivacity, opportunity, all prevailed, and she began to take notice in very joyous fashion. She did not at all recognize the doctrine preached by certain mammas and certain other damsels, that she as an engaged girl should hold aloof now and give the other girls, not so pretty, a chance. The barracks were gay that winter: Laura danced with the gayest, and when Barclay got leave in April and came down for a fortnight he found himself

much in the way of two young gentlemen who danced delightfully, a thing he could not do at all. Yet he had sweet hours with his sweetheart, and grew even more deeply in love, so beautiful was she growing, and went back to Sanders a second time thinking himself happiest of the happy, or bound to be when, in the coming autumn, he could claim her as his own. But Waite was troubled. He was to take the field the 1st of May; his troops would be in saddle and on scout away to the west all summer long; his wife and daughter were to spend those months at the sea-shore and in shopping for the great event to come in November. He had a long, earnest talk with Barclay when once more the devoted fellow came to see the lady of his love on the eve of her departure for the East, but Barclay looked into her radiant, uplifted eyes, and could not read the shadow of coming events, of which she was as ignorant as he. In May he led his men on the march to the Big Horn, and in June she led with Cadet Lieutenant Winn the german at the graduation hop at West Point. Then Winn was assigned to duty, as was the custom of the day, one of two or three young graduates chosen as assistant instructors during the summer camp. He had an hour to devote to drill each morning and a dozen to devote to the girls, and Laura Waite,

with her lovely face and form, was the talk of the brilliant throng of visitors that summer. She and her mother returned to the Point as guests of some old friends there stationed, a visit which was not on the original programme at all. Winn took the girl riding day after day, and to hops week after week. The shopping for the wedding went on betweentimes, and Winn even escorted them to the city and took part in the shopping. In fine, when November came, in spite of the furious opposition of her father, in spite of his refusal to attend the ceremony or to countenance it in any way, Winn, *vice* Barclay, honorably discharged, appeared as groom, and bore his bride away to a round of joyous festivities among army friends in New Orleans and San Antonio before their final exile to the far frontier. From that day to this no line had ever come from the angered and aging man, even when Laura's baby girl was born. Funds he sent from time to time, —he knew he'd have to do that, as he told her mother and she told her friends,—and then, just as more funds were much needed because of pressing claims of creditors whose bills had not been paid from previous remittances, Winn being much in the field and Laura becoming disburser general in his absence, the major suddenly died, leaving a small life insurance for his disconsolate

widow and nothing to speak of for his children. They had sucked him dry during his busy life.

The Winns did not invite Mr. Hodge to dinner, and were not bidden to meet him. Laura was still in light mourning for her father, and for days she really heard very little of Hodge's revelations regarding her discarded Wyoming lover. It was through the nurse-girl, an old soldier's daughter, that she first began to glean the chaff of the stories flitting from house to house, and to hear the exaggeration of Hodge's romancings about Captain Barclay's wealth, for that, after all, proved the most vividly interesting of the travellers' tales he told. Barclay proved to be, said Hodge, an expert mineralogist and geologist, and this was of value when a craze for dabbling in mining stocks swept over Sanders. Barclay, who lived so simply in garrison, was discovered (through a breach of confidence on the part of the officiating clergyman, that well-nigh led to another breach) to be the principal subscriber to the mission church being built in Laramie City. It suddenly became known that Barclay had a balance in the local bank and reserve funds at the East, whereupon promoters and prospectors by the dozen called upon him at the fort and strove to induce him to take stock in their mines. Nine out of ten were sent to the

right-about, even those who called his attention to the fact that Colonel This and Major That were large shareholders. One or two he gave ear to, and later got leave of absence and visited their distant claims. He was out prospecting, said Hodge, half the time in the fall of '68. The ventures of the other officers seemed to prove prolific sources of assessments. The Lord only knows how much fun and money the mine-owners of those days got out of the army. But they failed to impress the puritanical captain, and by the summer of '69 they ceased to do business in his neighborhood, for before sending good money after bad, officers had taken to consulting Barclay, and many an honest fellow's hoarded savings were spared to his wife and children, all through Barclay's calm and patient exposition of the fallacy of the "Company's" claims.

Then, said Hodge, when Channing, of the 27th, was killed by Red Cloud's band back of Laramie Peak, and his heart-broken widow and children were left penniless, somebody found the money to send them all to their friends in New England and to see them safely established there. And when Porter's wife was taken so ill while he was away up north of the Big Horn, and the doctor said that a trained nurse must be had in the first place, there came one from far Chicago; and

later, after Porter reached the post, overjoyed to find his beloved one slowly mending and so skilfully guarded, the doctors told him she must be taken to the sea-shore or the South, and, though every one at Sanders knew poor Porter had not a penny, it was all arranged somehow, and Emily Porter came back the next winter a rosy, blooming, happy wife. No one knew for certain that all the needed money came from Barclay, but as the Porters seemed to adore him from that time on, and their baby boy was baptized Galbraith Barclay, everybody had reason to believe it. If Mrs. Winn ever wanted to experience the exhilaration of hearing what other people thought of her, she had only, said Mr. Hodge in confidence, to turn Mrs. Porter loose on that subject.

Then, too, said Hodge, there was Ordnance Sergeant Murphy and his family, burned out one winter's night with all their savings, and the old man dreadfully scorched in trying to rescue his strong box from the flames. It must have been Barclay who looked after the mother and kids all the time the old man was moaning in hospital. They moved him into a newly furnished and comfortable shack inside of a fortnight, and the Murphys had another saint on their domestic calendar, despite the non-appearance of his name in the voluminous records of their Church. All this and

more did Hodge tell of Barclay, as in duty bound, he said, after first telling what other fellows long said of him,—that he was close and mean, a prig, a namby-pamby (despite the way he fought Crow-Killer's warlike band), a wet blanket to garrison joys, etc., etc.; and yet they really couldn't tell why. He subscribed just as much to the hop fund, though he didn't hop,—to the supper fund, though he didn't sup,—to the mess fund for the entertainment of visiting officers, though he didn't drink,—to the dramatic fund, though he couldn't act,—to the garrison hunt, though they said he couldn't ride. But he declined to give one cent towards the deficiency bill that resulted when Sanders entertained Steele at an all-night symposium at the sutler's and opened case after case of champagne and smoked box after box of cigars. "It was a senseless, soulless proceeding," said he, with brutal frankness. "Half the money you drank or smoked up in six hours could have clothed and fed all the children in Sudstown for six months."

"Lord, but they were mad all through," said Hodge, when describing it. "There wasn't a name they didn't call him all that winter."

"And yet I hear," said Mrs. Tremaine, a woman Fort Worth loved and looked up to as the —th did to Mrs. Stannard, "that for a long time

past they have called him Sir Galahad instead of Galbraith."

"Oh," said Hodge, "that's one of old Gleason's jokes. He said they called him 'Gal I had' when he went to Omaha and 'Gal I hadn't' when he got back,"—a statement which sent Major Brooks swearing *sotto voce* from the room.

"I don't know which I'd rather kick," said he, "Hodge or Gleason. I'd rejoice in Barclay's coming if it weren't—if Lawrence were only here, if Winn were only away."

CHAPTER III.

An unhappy man was Major Brooks that gloomy month of March. The news from Washington *via* Department Head-Quarters was most discouraging as to Lawrence. He was both looking and doing ill. It seemed to "break him all up," said a letter from a friend in the Adjutant-General's office, that so few could be found to urge the Secretary to do something for him. What could they do? was the answer. Admitting that Lawrence had been grievously wronged, "whose fault was it?" said the Secretary; "not mine." He had only acted on the information and recommendation of officers to whom this work had been intrusted. If they had erred, he should have been informed of it before. "How could you be informed," said the Senator who had championed the poor fellow's cause, "when you resorted to a system that would have shamed a Spaniard in the days of the Inquisition, or the Bourbons with their *lettres de cachet* and the Bastile?" No one dreamed that Lawrence was in danger until he was done to death, and so, out of money, out of clothes, out of hope, health, and

courage, poor Ned was fretting his heart out, while tender women and loyal friends were keeping guard over his shabby army home and caring for his two motherless lambs away out on the far frontier, awaiting the day when he should be restored to them.

It did not come, nor did Lawrence. An old comrade of the Sixth Corps, a gallant volunteer brigade commander, then in prosperous circumstances at Washington, had given him the shelter of his home, only too gladly keeping him in rations and cigars, as he would have done in clothes and pocket-money, but he shook his head at whiskey. "For God's sake, Ned, and for your babies' sake, leave that alone. It can't help you. You never were a drinking man before. Don't drink now, or your nerve will give out utterly." This and more he urged and pleaded, but Lawrence's pride seemed crushed and his heart broken. Legal advisers told his friends at last that restoration was impossible: his place was filled. He had only one course left if he would listen to nothing but restoration to the army, and that was to accept a second lieutenancy and begin over again at the bottom of the list. They broached it to him, and he broke out into wild, derisive laughter. "Good God! do you mean that a man who has served fifteen years in the army,

fought all through the war and served as I have served, must step down from the squadron captaincy to ride behind the boys just out of the Point? be ranked out of quarters by my own son-in-law the next thing I know! I'll see the army in hell first," was his furious reply.

"No, Ned, not hell, but Texas. Take it; go back to the line, and once you're back in the army in any grade we'll legislate you up to the majority you deserve: see if we don't."

But Lawrence had lost all faith in promises, or in Congressional action. He turned in contempt from the proposition, and in early April came the tidings to San Antonio that he was desperately ill.

Meanwhile Mr. Hodge had lost the *prestige* of his first appearance at Worth, and fell into the customary rut of the subaltern. People found him as monotonous as did the martyrs of the Upper Platte, and, from having been the most sought-after of second lieutenants, he dropped back to the plane of semi-obscurity. This was galling. Hodge's stock in trade had been the facts or fables in his possession concerning the absent Captain Barclay, whose present whereabouts and plans were shrouded in mystery. A rumor came that he had decided not to join at all; that he was in Washington striving to arrange a transfer;

that his assignment to the regiment and to the post where he must meet the woman who had jilted him for a cavalry subaltern was something unforeseen and not to be tolerated. The muster roll couldn't account for him other than as permitted to delay three months by Special Orders No. So-and-so, War Department, A.G.O., January 25, 1871. This gave Hodge unlooked-for reinforcements. A fortnight passed in March without a bid to dinner anywhere, without a request for further particulars as to Sir Galahad. So long as that interesting personage was expected any day to appear and answer for himself, it behooved Hodge to be measurably guarded in his statements, to keep within the limits of his authorities; but one day there came a letter from a lady at Department Head-Quarters to Mrs. Brooks, and before Brooks himself was made aware of the contents, he being at the club-room playing "pitch" and therefore beyond the pale of feminine consideration, the news was going the rounds of the garrison.

Mrs. Pelham, who was spending the winter in Washington, had written to an old and devoted friend of Major Waite's some very interesting news about Captain Barclay. The captain was in Washington a whole week, but had not called on Mrs. Pelham, though she had done everything

she could think of for him when he was wounded. (The Pelhams were then at McPherson and near old Waite's summer camp, but no one ever heard of her ladyship's ever taking the faintest interest in Barclay until after he developed into a mine-owner and had been jilted by Laura Waite.) But let Mrs. Pelham talk for herself, as she usually did, as well as for every one else. "He spent the first week in February here, leaving just before poor Captain Lawrence came. No wonder he didn't wish to meet him! And Mrs. Waite was there, buttonholing everybody to get her pension increased, and wearing the costliest crape you ever saw, my dear, and—think of it!—solitaire diamond ear-rings with it! She had a room in a house where several prominent Congressmen boarded, and was known as 'the fascinating widow.' She sent to Barclay,—would you believe it?—and begged him to come to see her, and he *actually did;* and Mrs. Cutts, who lives in the same house, told me that you ought to have seen her that day,—no solitaire ear-rings or handsome crape, mind you, but tears and bombazine; and Mrs. Cutts vows that he gave her money. That woman is angling for another husband, and has been ever since poor Waite's death, and if anything were to happen to Mr. Winn it's just what Laura would be doing too. It runs in the blood,

my dear. You know, and I know, that all the time she was at Omaha Barracks and the major in the field, she—a woman with a grown son and a graduating daughter—was dancing with the boys at the hops and riding—yes, and buggy-riding—with bachelors like those wretches Gates and Hagadorn." Buggy-riding was the unpardonable sin in Mrs. Pelham's eyes, she being "too massive to sit in anything short of the side seat of an ambulance," as said a regimental wit; and Mrs. Pelham looked with eyes of disfavor on women who managed to "keep their waists" as Mrs. Waite did.

"But let me tell you about Captain Barclay," continued the letter. "General Corliss called to see me two evenings ago and said he heard that Barclay was actually a millionaire,—that he had large interests in Nevada mines that were proving fabulously rich. You can understand that I wasn't at all surprised to hear that the general had intimated to Mr. Ray, of his staff, that it would be much better for him to go and serve with his regiment awhile. Ray wouldn't be an acceptable son-in-law; he has no money and too many fascinations, and there are both the Corliss girls, you know, to be provided for, and Miranda is already *passé*, and Ray has resigned the place, and the place is vacant, for—would you believe

it?—they say the general tendered it to Barclay, and Barclay declined. Why, when we were all at McPherson there wasn't anything satirical the Corlisses didn't say about Barclay, and now that he has money they bow down to and worship him." ("Something Mrs. Pelham wouldn't do for the world," said Mrs. Brooks to herself, with an odd smile.) "And when the general was asked about it yesterday he couldn't deny having made the offer, but said the reason Captain Barclay declined was that he would very probably resign in a few weeks, his business interests being such as to render it necessary for him to leave the army. So, my dear, you won't have the millionaire in Texas, after all, and I fancy how deeply Laura Winn will be disappointed. No matter how much she cares for her husband, she wouldn't be her mother's daughter if she didn't try to fascinate him over again."

Fancy the comfort of having such a letter as that to read to an appreciative audience! Mrs. Brooks fled with it to Mrs. Frazier, who thought it ought not to be read,—it was too like Dorothy Pelham for anything. But Mrs. Brooks took and read it to neighbors who were chatting and sewing together and had no such scruples. And that night it was dribbling about the post that Barclay had decided to resign, had refused a detail on the

staff of General Corliss: somebody else would get Ned Lawrence's troop. Brooks heaved a sigh and said to himself he was glad of it, and the women heaved a sigh and wished he might have come, if only for a little while, just to make things interesting: "it would be such a novelty to have a millionaire mine-owner in garrison and actually doing duty as a captain of cavalry." Finally they began to wonder what Mrs. Winn would say now, she having had nothing at all to say.

That very evening it chanced to occur to Mr. Hodge that he had not returned Lieutenant Winn's call (by card,—the cavalryman having dropped in when he knew the new arrival to have dropped out), and when Hodge presented himself at the Winns' (he had spoken of his intention at mess in the presence and hearing of the negro attendant, who had mentioned it without delay to the Winns' colored combination of cook and serving-maid, who had come over to borrow a cup of cooking sherry, it being too far to the sutler's, and that damsel had duly notified her mistress of the intended honor), he was shown into the dimly lighted army sitting-room, where, toasting her feet before the fire, sat dreaming the young mistress of the establishment, who started up in apparent surprise. She had heard neither the step nor the ring. Very possibly she was dozing, she

admitted, for baby was sleeping aloft and her husband was gone. She was attired in a silken gown that Hodge described somewhat later at the major's as "puffickly stunning,"—a garment that revealed the rich curves of her beautiful throat and neck and arms; women who heard wondered why she should be wearing that most becoming evening robe when there was not even a hop. She looked handsomer than the gown, said Hodge, as she rose and greeted him, her cheeks flushed, her eyes languorous and smouldering at first, then growing slowly brilliant. She apologized for the absence of Mr. Winn. He was spending much time at the office just now. "He is regimental commissary, you know, or at least he has been," she explained. Hodge knew all about that, and he also knew that if what he heard about the post was true it would have been better had Winn spent more time at the office before. Then Mrs. Winn was moved to be gracious. She had heard so many, many pleasant things of Mr. Hodge since his arrival. She was so honored that he should call when he must be having so many claims on his time, so many dinner-calls to pay. She and Mr. Winn were so sorry they had been unable to entertain Mr. Hodge, but, until the cook they were expecting from San Antonio came, they were positively starving, and could invite no

one to share their scraps. "That cook has been expected a whole year," said other women, but Mrs. Winn paraded him as the cause of her social short-comings as confidently as ever. Then Mrs. Winn went on to speak of how much she had heard of Hodge at Omaha,—dear Omaha. "What lovely times we had along the Platte in the good old days!" Hodge blushed with joy, and preened and twittered and thought how blessed a thing it was to be welcomed to the fireside of such a belle and beauty and to be remembered by her as one of the gay young bachelors at Sidney. "Such wicked stories as we heard of you scapegraces from time to time," said she, whereat Hodge looked as though he might, indeed, have been shockingly wicked, as perhaps he had. Indeed, she feared they, the young officers, were "a sad lot, a sad lot," and looked up at him from under the drooping lashes in a way that prompted him to an inspiration that was almost electric in its effect on him. Hodge fairly seemed to sparkle, to scintillate. "Sad! We were in despair," said he, "but that was when we heard of your engagement—oh, ah, the second one, I mean," he stumbled on, for it would never do, thought he, to mention the first.

But he need have had no hesitation. Laura Winn had heard from other and obscurer sources

something of the rumors floating over the post that very day. She had planned to drop in at the colonel's, where the Fraziers entertained at dinner and music that very evening, in hopes of hearing accidentally something definite, for Winn was one of those useless husbands who never hear anything of current gossip. But women might not talk if they thought she wished to hear, and fate had provided her a better means. She saw here and now the opportunity and the man. It was Hodge who had told so much that was of vivid interest to her. It was Hodge she had been longing to meet for days, but Winn had held him aloof, and now here she had this ingenuous repository of Barclayisms all to herself until Winn should return; the chance was not to be lost.

"I love to live over those dear old days when I was a girl," she said. "Friends seemed so real then, men so true, life so buoyant. Sometimes I find myself wishing there were more of the old friends, the old set, here. We seem—so much more to each other, don't you know, Mr. Hodge?" And Hodge felt sure "we" did, and hitched his chair a foot nearer the fire.

"Of course I was younger then, and knew so little of the world, and yet, knowing it as I do now—I can say this to you, you know, Mr. Hodge,—I couldn't to another soul here, for you

were *of* us, you served with father's column" (Hodge's service was limited to playing poker with "those wretches Gates and Hagadorn" and others of Waite's command on one or two memorable occasions, and the resultant hole in his purse was neither as broad as a church nor deep as a well, but 'twould serve). "I've often felt here as though I would give anything to see some of the dear old crowd; not that people are not very lovely here, but, you know, we army friends cling so to the old associations." And now the beautiful eyes seemed almost suffused, and Hodge waxed eloquent.

"I am thrice fortunate," said he, recalling the lines of his Maltravers, "in that I am numbered among them." And now, like Laura, he looked upon Worth as cold and dormant as compared with the kindling friendships of the distant Platte.

"Indeed you are!" said she. "You bring back the sweetest days of my life, and some of the saddest. I have no one to speak to me, you know, —of course—until you did a moment ago. Tell me, is—is his life so changed as—as they say it is?"

"I never saw a man so broke up," he responded. "He never smiled after you—after—after it was broken off, you know." Barclay's smile was as

rare as a straight flush anyhow, he admitted to himself, but the assertion sounded well.

"And—of late—what have you heard of him?" she asked. And Hodge poured forth his latest news, and added more. He, too, he said, had had a letter from an intimate friend. Captain Barclay had declared that the assignment to the Twelfth Cavalry was impossible, Texas was impossible. His business interests would necessitate his declining if, indeed, there were no other reasons. General Corliss had tendered him the position of aide-de-camp and made Billy Ray of the —th resign to make way for him, and the moment Barclay found that out he went to Ray and told him the whole business was without his (Barclay's) knowledge, and sooner than displace him he would refuse. "Yes," said Hodge, "that's the way my friend heard it from Ray himself. Now, if Barclay could only get a detail on McDowell's staff in California it would have suited him to a tee; then he could have looked after his Nevada interests and his Wyoming pensioners too."

Did Mr. Hodge know surely about Mr. Barclay's wealth? Was it all true? he was asked.

Oh, yes, there wasn't a doubt of it, said Hodge. It was just another of those cases where a man had money in abundance, and yet would have

given it all, he added, sentimentally, but here she uplifted rebukingly her white, slim hand,—or was it warningly? for there came a quick footfall on the porch without. The hall door opened sharply, letting in a gust of cold night wind, and, throwing off his cavalry cape with its faded yellow lining, Lieutenant Winn strode through the hallway into his little den at the rear.

"You will come and see me again," she murmured low, while yet the footsteps resounded, "it has been so—good to see you,—so like old times. We'll have to talk of other things now. Mr. Winn doesn't like old times too well."

But Mr. Winn never so much as looked in the parlor door until she called to him. Then, as she saw his face, the young wife arose with anxiety in her own.

"What is it? Where are you going—with your revolver, too? Mr. Hodge, dear."

"Oh-h! Beg pardon, Mr. Hodge. Glad to see you," was Winn's distraught acknowledgment of the presence of the visitor, as he extended a reluctant hand. "My sergeant can't be found," he went on, hurriedly. "They say he's gone to Fuller's ranch, and it may be all right, but the colonel has ordered out a patrol to fetch him back. Don't worry, Laurie; I may have to ride out with it."

And hurriedly he kissed her and bounded down the steps.

For a moment she stood in the doorway, the light from the hall lamp shining on her dusky hair and proud, beautiful face, forgetful of the man who stood gazing at her. Then with a shiver she suddenly turned.

"It's the second time that Sergeant Marsden has been missed in just this way, when he was most needed, and—it's so imprudent, so—and my husband is so imprudent, so unsuspicious. Mr. Hodge," she cried, impulsively, "if you've heard anything, or if you do hear anything, about him or Mr. Winn, be a friend to me and tell me, won't you?" And there was nothing Hodge would not have promised, nothing he would not have told, but the door of the adjoining quarters slammed, an officer came striding along the porch common to the double set, and the clank of a sabre was heard as he neared them.

"Winn gone?" he asked. "Don't worry, Mrs. Winn. We'll overhaul that scoundrel before he can reach the settlements, unless——"

"But what is wrong? What has happened, Mr. Brayton?" she asked, her face white with dread, her heart fluttering.

"My Lord, Mrs. Winn, I beg your pardon! I supposed of course he had told you. Marsden's

bolted. Colonel Riggs, the inspector-general, got here to-night with Captain Barclay, instead of coming by regular stage Saturday, and Marsden lit out the moment he heard of their arrival. Of course we hope Winn isn't badly bitten."

But her thoughts were of another matter now. "Captain Barclay," she faltered, "here? Why, I—I heard——"

"Yes," shouted the young officer, as he went clattering down the steps. "'Scuse me—I've got to mount at once," as an orderly came running up at the moment with his horse. "Riggs has come, post-haste, only Barclay and one man with him besides the driver. It's lucky that Friday gang never got wind of it."

CHAPTER IV.

For forty-eight hours Fort Worth was in turmoil. To begin with, the sudden, unheralded advent of a department inspector in those days meant something ominous, and from Frazier down to the drum-boys the garrison scented mischief the moment that familiar old black-hooded, dust-covered spring wagon, drawn by the famous six-mule team, came spinning in across the *mesa* just after retreat, no escort whatever being in sight. Cavalrymen had trotted alongside, said Riggs, from two of the camps on the way, but they had made that long day's drive from Crockett Springs all alone, trusting to luck that the Friday gang, so called, would not get wind of it. Just who and how many constituted that array of outlaws no man, including its own membership, could accurately say. Two paymasters, two wagon-trains, and no end of mail-stages had been "jumped" by those enterprising road agents in the course of the five years that followed the war, and not once had a conviction occurred. Arrests had been made by marshals, sheriffs, and officers in command of detachments, but a more innocent lot of victims, according to the testi-

mony of friends and fellow-citizens, never dwelt in Dixie. Three only of their number had been killed and left for recognition in the course of those three years. One only of these was known, and the so-called Friday gang managed to surround its haunts, its movements, and its membership with a mystery that defied civil officials and baffled the military. Escorts the size of a cavalry platoon had been needed every time a disbursing officer went to and fro, and a sizable squad accompanied the stage whenever it carried even a moderate amount of treasure. At three points along the road from the old Mexican capital to the outlying posts, strong detachments of cavalry had been placed in camp, so that relays of escorts might be on hand when needed. At three different times within the past two years, strong *posses* had gone with the civil officials far into the foot-hills in search of the haunts of the band, but no occupied haunt was ever found, no band of any size or consequence ever encountered; yet depredations were incessant. The mail-stage came and went with guarded deliberation. The quartermaster's trains were accompanied by at least a company of infantry. The sutler's wagons travelled with the quartermaster's train, and the sutler's money went to San Antonio only when the quartermaster and commissary sent theirs,

and then a whole squadron had been known to ride in charge. Anything from a wagon-train down to a buckboard was game for the gang, and soldiers, ranchmen, and prospectors told stories of having been halted, overhauled, and searched by its masked members at various times, and, whether found plethoric or poor, having been hospitably entertained as soon as robbed of all they possessed. Only four days before Riggs made his venturesome dash, three discharged soldiers, filled with impatience and whiskey, had sought to run the gauntlet to the camp at Crockett's, and came back, in the robbers' cast-off clothing, to "take on" for another term, having parted with their uniforms and the savings of several years at the solicitation of courteous strangers they met along the route. Nothing but an emergency could have brought Riggs, full tilt, for he was getting along in years and loved the comforts of his army home.

Emergency it was, as he explained to Frazier instantly on his arrival. The general had indubitable information that ranches to the south had long been buying government stores, bacon, feed, flour, coffee, etc. The source of their supply could only be the warehouses at Worth, and Marsden was a "swell" sergeant, whose airs and affluence had made him the object of suspicion. Those were the days when cavalry regiments had

a commissary, but Congress did away with the office, and Winn, whom an indulgent colonel had detailed to that supposedly "soft snap" when regimental head-quarters were stationed at Worth, had been left there with his bulky array of boxes and barrels when the colonel and staff were transferred to a more southern post, the understanding being that he was to turn over everything to Frazier's new quartermaster as soon as that official should arrive. Frazier's appointee, however, was a lieutenant from a distant station. The War Department had not improved the appointment when made. Correspondence had been going on, and only within the week was notification received that the choice was finally confirmed and that Lieutenant Trott would soon arrive. Meantime Winn remained, but the stores were going. Somebody had money enough to bribe the sentries nightly posted at the storehouse at the northern corner of the big rectangle, and wagon-load after wagon-load must have been driven away. Outwardly, as developed by the count made early on the morning following Riggs's coming, all was right, but a veteran cavalry sergeant scoffingly knocked in the heads of cask, box, and barrel, and showed how bacon by the cord had been replaced by rags and boulders, sugar, coffee, and flour by bushels of sand,

molasses and vinegar by branch water, and tea and tobacco by trash. "Two to three thousand dollars' worth of rations gone," said Riggs, at noon, "and the devil to pay if Winn cannot." Vain the night ride to Fuller's ranch in search of Marsden. That worthy had long since feathered his portable nest, and on one of the quartermaster's best horses had left the post within the half-hour of Riggs's coming, no man knew for what point after once he crossed the ford. Hoof-tracks by the hundred criss-crossed and zigzagged over the southward *mesa*. Thick darkness had settled down. Fuller's people swore no signs of him had been seen, and, though patrols kept on all night, poor Winn came back despairing an hour before the dawn to face his fate; even at noon he had hardly begun to realize the extent of his overwhelming loss.

"Go home and try to sleep," said the colonel, sadly, to the dumb and stricken man. "You can do no good here. I'll send the doctor to you."

But Winn started up and shook the old fellow's kindly hand. "I cannot go. My God! I must know the whole business," he cried. "I cannot sleep or eat a morsel."

"Whatever you do, don't drink," said Riggs, in not unkindly warning. "Go and see your wife, anyhow, for an hour or so. She has sent three

times." But words were useless. Sympathetic comrades came and strove with him and said empty words of hope or cheer,—empty, because they knew poor Winn had not a soul in the world to whom to look for help. Kin to half a dozen old army names, it helped him not a whit, for no one of them was blessed with means beyond the monthly pay, and some had not even that unmortgaged. Twenty-five hundred dollars' shortage already, to say nothing of the cash for recent sales, and more, no doubt, to come. The very thought was ruin. Refusing comfort, the hapless man sat down at his littered desk, stared again at the crowded, dusty pigeon-holes, and saw nothing, nothing but misery, if not despair.

Brayton went over at luncheon-time and begged a word with Mrs. Winn. She peered over the balustrade from the second story, with big, black-rimmed eyes, but could not come down, could not leave baby, who was fretful, she said. Oh, why didn't Mr. Winn come home? What good did it do to stay over there and worry? When would they get through? Brayton couldn't say, but Winn couldn't come,—felt he must stay at the office; but if Mrs. Winn would have some tea and a bite of luncheon prepared, he, Brayton, would gladly take it over. Yet even this friendly office seemed to bring no solace. Winn barely

sipped the tea or tasted the savory broth. Frazier and Riggs went out to luncheon, leaving him still seated at his desk; and their faces were black with gloom when they reached the colonel's door. Winn's distressing plight, following so shortly after the dire misfortune that had happened to Lawrence, would have saddened the whole garrison and tinged all table-talk with melancholy but for the blessed antidote afforded in Captain Barclay's sudden and most unlooked-for coming.

And what a surprise it was! All one afternoon and part of one evening had Fort Worth been telling that Captain Barclay had refused the assignment to a regiment and post where he must meet Laura Winn; that he had resigned rather than encounter once more the woman who had played him false; that he was too wealthy to care to bury himself in this out-of-the-way hole in Texas anyhow; and even while they were talking, all unheralded, here he was. The major's hospitable doors opened to receive him within ten minutes of his dust-covered advent, and only by hearsay all that night could the garrison know of his presence. One small sole-leather trunk, with the travelling-bag, rifle, field-glasses, canteen, and lunch-box, constituted all the personal luggage of the new arrival. It could not even be said that any one outside of Brooks's had even seen

him, so coated with dust were the contents of that old spring wagon when unloaded at the colonel's steps; and many a woman hastened to her door on the following morning, attracted thither by the announcement that Captain Barclay was on the major's porch.

There, with his host, he stood for quite a while, the major pointing out the landmarks along the westward range, and indicating, apparently, other features in the landscape. One or two officers, hastening by, raised their caps or ran up the steps and shook hands with the new-comer, but he was presently summoned in to breakfast, and neighbors could only say he was not very tall, not very stout, not very slight, not very anything. Captain De Lancy, who had had three minutes' conversation, said he "seemed pleasant," but that was all. Mrs. De Lancy was confirmed in her preconceived opinion that men were owls, because her husband was unable to add to the military descriptive list of brown eyes, brown hair, brown beard and clothes, any of the particulars she sought. He couldn't tell whether Barclay had fine teeth or good complexion, what his mouth was like, whether he had nice hands and voice. Indeed, he couldn't see why Mrs. De Lancy should be so anxious to know. Not until towards noon was any reliable particular concern-

ing Captain Barclay passed along the line. Then the domestic bulletin dealt out the fact that the millionaire mine-owner wore a flannel shirt and a silver watch, which information was distinctly disheartening.

But that evening, while the colonel and other officers began calling at Brooks's to welcome formally the unexpected addition to the commissioned force, Mrs. Brooks was able to slip out and over to her crony, Mrs. De Lancy, and in ten minutes she had an audience, married and single, that gladdened her heart. She could and did talk almost uninterruptedly for over an hour. Arriving dames or damsels were signalled not to interrupt, and, joining the circle, patiently withheld their questions until she paused for breath; and then what every one seemed to want to know was, had he said anything or asked anything about Mrs. Winn? He had. He expressed the utmost sympathy with poor Mr. Winn. He told Major Brooks of a similar experience that occurred in the —d Cavalry only the year previous, and how it would probably take the defrauded officer years to square the account. He most delicately inquired as to the general health and well-being of Mrs. Winn, whom he had had the pleasure, he said, of meeting several years before; but more particularly he had asked about Lawrence, and

Lawrence's children, and who was in charge of them; it was evident that he was deeply concerned about them and most anxious to meet Captain and Mrs. Blythe.

"Well, that's one thing at least in his favor," was the verdict; for throughout Brooks's battalion, as it was then called, or squadron, as we should call it to-day, there existed an indefinable feeling of antagonism towards this stranger within their gates, thus coming to usurp the place Ned Lawrence held in their hearts and homes, if no longer on their rolls. Some one slipped out and brought in Mrs. Blythe, for whose benefit Mrs. Brooks not unwillingly went over all she had told about Captain Barclay's queries as to the children and their benefactors; and that sweet, tender-hearted, motherly woman ought to have softened to him, but didn't. "He could have heard it all at San Antonio for the asking," she declared. "But he didn't stop two days at San Antonio," explained Mrs. Brooks. "The moment he heard that Colonel Riggs was going on by special ambulance he begged to be allowed to go with him, and Riggs couldn't see a way to say no, and later confessed he was very glad he had said yes."

"Brooks, you were all growling at the idea of having any outsider, much less a doughboy, take Lawrence's place," were the bluff old veteran's

exact words; "but you mark what I say. I was rather prejudiced against this young fellow myself, and it has just taken this jolt together from San Antonio to satisfy me he is grit to the backbone, and you are in big luck to get him."

At least a dozen men called at the major's that evening to pay their respects to the new comrade. It was long after taps when the last one left, but, almost to a man, they gathered at the club-room later to compare notes. Hodge, of course, had called among the first, his claim of intimate or at least old acquaintance rendering it necessary. Barclay's brown eyes certainly lighted at the sight of the face he had known in the far northwest; he chatted for a moment with the infantryman, and expressed his pleasure at meeting him again. Then Blythe entered, with his grave, massive face and courteous yet reserved manner; and Brooks spoke of the fact that Barclay seemed to shake hands more earnestly with him than with any of the others, and to look at him oftener, though striving to slight no one. They sat there, as men will at such times, somewhat awkwardly, only one speaking at once, and generally the same one. Hodge, for instance, had much to say and many questions to ask about fellows he had known in Wyoming, and when he left and others came in, three or four went at the same time, having sat

stolid listeners, calmly studying Barclay with their eyes and finally saying good-night, and "hope to see you when you get settled," etc.

They were talking of him at the store, and wondering when and where he would settle, and whether he would take Lawrence's quarters, and what would then become of Ada and little Jim, who with old Mammy still occupied their rooms there and had all the furniture as poor daddy left it, but who went over to the Blythes' three times a day to take their rations with their army chums and playmates, the little Blythes. "What a god-send it would be if he would buy poor Ned's books and furniture!" said De Lancy. "It would yield enough to send those poor babies home."

"Home," said Blythe, sadly: "what home has a child whose kith and kin are all of the army? They have neither home nor mother."

But no man made the faintest comment on facts the women remarked instanter, that Barclay's watch was only silver and his guard an inexpensive little cord or braid of fine leather, worn about his neck; that his travelling suit was of rough gray mixture, and his shirt a flannel *négligé*. But then, as Mrs. De Lancy explained in extenuation of their blindness, he had donned his uniform by the time they called that second evening, and it became him very well.

CHAPTER V.

A WEEK went rapidly by. Captain Barclay had gone on duty, and Mr. Brayton, his sub, had not yet "sized him up." Lieutenant Trott, the new regimental quartermaster, had arrived by the Saturday's stage, and was ready to receipt to Lieutenant Winn for all property he had to turn over; but Winn had broken down under his weight of woe and taken to his bed. From Washington came tidings, telegraphed as far as San Antonio, that Lawrence was slowly mending and would soon be sitting up. Mrs. Winn, absorbed in the care of her suffering husband, had accepted no invitations, but the many sympathetic women who called to ask if there were not some way in which they could be of aid reported her as looking feverish and far from well. Some of them had ventured to speak of the new arrival, and, though her ears were evidently open, her lips were closed. That she was willing, if not eager, to hear anything they had to say or tell about Captain Barclay was all very well as far as it went, but what some of her visitors most desired was to hear what she had to say about him; as

she would say nothing, one or two had resorted to a little delicate questioning in the hope of drawing her out. Mrs. Faulkner, a young matron of her own age and previous social standing, an army girl like herself, and for some time her one intimate friend at Worth, went so far as to ask, "You used to know him very well, did you not?" and was checkmated by the answer, "Not well enough to talk about," which answer Mrs. Faulkner pondered over and considered deliberately and inexcusably rude. With the kindest feeling for her in the world, as all the women avowed, and no animosity whatever towards Barclay over and beyond that feeling on poor Colonel Lawrence's account, there was the liveliest interest at Worth as regarded Mrs. Winn and Captain Barclay in seeing what they would do; and, to the disappointment of all Fort Worth, they had done nothing.

Barclay promptly returned the calls of the officers who had called upon him, and had done all proper homage to the wives of those who were possessed of such blessings, but there were still certain quarters where his face or his card had not been seen: at Captain Cram's, for instance, because that warrior was on scout and couldn't call, ditto his lieutenant; at one or two of the new and unpolished pillars of the temple, because they

had not known enough or had been too shy to call; and at Winn's, because that officer was ill of a fever and could not call. There was another set of quarters in which he had not yet set foot, —Ned Lawrence's; and that was the house most people expected him to visit first.

Nor did he remain at Brooks's. The major's house was big, but so was his household. "You have a vacant room here, Mr. Brayton," he said, the third day after his arrival, as he dropped in at his subaltern's. "It may be a month before I get shaken down into place. I dislike to disturb women and children, and so have decided to ask you to let me move my cot and trunk in here awhile and to propose my name at the mess." And Brayton, blushing at the realization of the fact that the furniture in the room referred to consisted solely of some chairs, a square pine table covered with a cavalry blanket, with a cigar-box half full of smoking-tobacco, another half full of white beans, and a pack of cards for its sole ornaments, nevertheless bravely ushered his new captain into the bower, and Barclay looked neither surprised nor satirical at the sight. "We sometimes play a mild game of draw here, sir," said downright Brayton, "which accounts for the appearance of things; but my striker can clean it up in ten minutes, and you are most welcome."

"It won't put you out in any way?" asked Barclay, without the comment of an uplifted eyebrow on the evidence adduced.

"Not so much as poker, if it does at all," said Brayton, promptly. He was determined his captain should know the extent of his frailties at the start.

Barclay smiled quietly and turned to the boy with liking in his eye. "I'm hardly ten years your senior, Brayton," said he, "and so shall not preach, but I believe we can put that room to a little better use."

The next day he took his seat at the bachelors' mess, where a dozen officers were congregated, all of them but two his juniors in rank. The sideboard was lavishly decked with the indispensables of that benighted day. The old-timers and the new took their anteprandial cocktail or toddy, and hospitably invited Barclay to join. Barclay smiled gratefully, but said he had "never yet got in the way of it, somehow," nor did he more than sip at the Bordeaux which the presiding officer ordered served in honor of the occasion. The mess was rather silent. Most men seemed desirous of listening to Barclay when he spoke at all. They knew every twist and turn of each other's mode of speech by that time, and could repeat verbatim every story in the combination.

Barclay might have something new; but if he did he had no chance. Captain Follansbee took and kept the floor from first to last. He was airing his views on the subject of consolidation, reorganization, and purification as practised at the War Department, a topic which the others considered inexcusable, not so much from the fact that it must be most unpalatable to Captain Barclay, a beneficiary of the business, as it turned out, as because Follansbee had worn them all out with it weeks before.

And, to everybody's surprise, so far from seeming annoyed or embarrassed or bored, Barclay led him on from point to point, and, even after coffee was served, sat an apparently absorbed listener, for by that time Follansbee had absorbed most of the claret and was dilating on the matter with especial reference to the case of Colonel Lawrence. Later that evening Barclay spent an hour at the Blythes', and two days after he and Brayton dined there.

It was a seven-o'clock dinner. The doctor and his wife, Major and Mrs. Brooks, Miss Frazier and Miss Amanda Frazier, were the other guests. Those were the days when officers of all grades wore epaulets when in full uniform, but, except in one or two swell messes, full dress was not considered requisite for either dinner or hops. The

men wore the uniform frock-coat with shoulder-straps; some few privileged characters even dared to appear in a sack-coat with white tie. Such a thing as the evening dress of civil life was unknown at a military post, and unowned in the fighting force of the army, outside, perhaps, of the artillery. The doctor was a privileged character, a man who said what he thought and did what he thought right; and when Mrs. Blythe, glancing out of her parlor window, saw their favored friend and medical adviser coming along the walk, his hands deep in his trousers-pockets and himself in a fit of abstraction and a new sack-coat, while the partner of his joys and sorrows chatted briskly with the Frazier girls, Mrs. Blythe called up-stairs to her massive liege lord, "Wear your blouse, dear; the doctor has on his"; whereupon Blythe slipped out of the uniform coat of formal cut and into the easy sack, and came trotting down the creaking stair in time to welcome his guests. Brooks, Barclay, and Brayton, who came later, were in the prescribed regulation dress, whereat Dr. Collabone exclaimed, "Hullo! Now that's what I ought to have done, if I'd had as much regard for conventionality as I have for health. Gentlemen, do you know you simply invite an apoplectic seizure by sitting down to dinner in a tightly buttoned uniform coat? It

is barbarous. There ought to be a regulation against it."

It was observed that while the doctor included all three of the cavalrymen in his remarks he looked at and apparently addressed only one, Captain Barclay, whose uniform coat was brand-new, very handsomely cut, its buttons and shoulder-straps of the finest make and finish, whereas the doctor's were tarnished, if not actually shabby. Brooks frowned, and Brayton looked embarrassed lest Barclay should take it amiss; but that officer remained smilingly interested, and in nowise troubled. The Frazier girls giggled, and Miss Amanda was prompt to assert that for her part she loved to see the officers wear the proper uniform, and she wasn't alarmed about apoplexy; whereupon Collabone smiled benignly and said, "What did I tell you about the danger of tight lacing?" Amanda couldn't bear the doctor. Her elder and primmer sister only half liked him. Many of the women thought him brusque and rude, but officers and men and mothers of families swore by him, and children adored him. A childless man himself, he seemed to keep open house for the offspring of his comrades. They swarmed about his quarters at all hours of the day. They invaded his parlor, overflowed his dining-room, and ruled his kitchen.

A kindly and placid soul was Mrs. Collabone, a woman who had few cares or perplexities, and these she promptly turned over to her broad-minded, broad-shouldered liege for final disposition, as serenely confident of their speedy dissipation as she was of the prompt conquest of any and all the manifold ills to which childish flesh is heir by that practitioner's infallible remedies. Children ran loose in those days in Texas; and so they ought to, said Collabone. "Savage races are the only scientific rearers," he maintained. "Boys or girls, they should be burdened with but a single garment, or less, from the time they're born until they're eight or ten, and meantime they should be made to eat, sleep, and live outdoors." He preached for children regularity in matters of diet, prescribed four light meals a day, practised heterodoxy, and distributed bread and milk, bread and syrup, bread and jam, cookies, corn dodgers, and molasses candy, morning, noon, and night. Aunt Purlina, the fat and jocund goddess of the Collabones' kitchen, had standing orders on such subjects, and many a time had the post surgeon to wait for his own refreshments because "the kids" had possession of the premises. There was never a worry along officers' row when children strayed from home. "Oh, they're over at the doctor's," was the soothing response to all

queries. The doctor's big yard was the garrison play-ground; for, when a soulless, heartless, childless, wifeless post commander, Frazier's predecessor, had dared to prohibit the use of the parade-ground for croquet, hop-scotch, marbles, or "Tom, Tom Pull-away," it was Collabone who rigged up swings and giant strides at his own expense and without the aid of the post quartermaster, and sent away to New Orleans for croquet sets for the exclusive use of the youngsters. It nettled inexpressibly the field officer commanding. He took it as a rebuke from his junior, and took it out in a course of nagging and persecution at the doctor's expense, that roused the energies of the entire post. Frazier was sent from Concho to supersede the objectionable lieutenant-colonel, who thereupon declared his intention of moving the doctor out and taking his quarters; but a courier galloped all the way from Worth to the camp at San Patricio, whither the department commander had gone a-hunting, and another got back in the nick of time with orders for the devastating officer to move to the cantonment on the Pecos, the worst hole in all Texas, as reported by the department inspector. The children had won the day.

At the very moment when the party took their seats at Blythe's, the children of that establish-

ment and their friends the Lawrences were holding high carnival at the doctor's, Aunt Purlina and the colored maid vying with each other in efforts to stuff them to repletion. Over this uproarious feast presided the tall slip of a damsel with whom poor Ned had parted so mournfully when he went away in February. Ada's was the only face in all the merry party that seemed to have known a trace of sorrow. Her big, dark, mournful eyes and shaggy hair, her sallow face and shabby frock, twice let down and still "skimpy," told a pathetic story. Thirteen years of age, the child had already seen much of anxiety and trouble,—much, indeed, beyond the ken of many an elder; and the week going by brought hour after hour of nervous wear and tear, the cause of which only one woman knew, and strove in vain to banish. Ada shrank with actual dread and repulsion from the thought of having to meet the man who had come to take her loved father's place.

Thrice had Barclay spoken to Mrs. Blythe of a desire to see the children of Colonel Lawrence; now he felt confident that he knew the cause of her evasion, and pressed no more. But all through dinner, even while speaking in the low, somewhat measured tones habitual to him, he lost no talk in which the children were mentioned; and at

Blythe's they were never forgotten. It was not long before he discovered that the Blythes and Lawrences—the young people—were at the doctor's, Ada presiding. Indeed, with much gusto, almost as soon as soup was served, Collabone began telling of her matronly, motherly ways. Half an hour later a messenger came to the door and asked if Dr. Collabone would please step over and see Mrs. De Lancy a moment. "Tell her I'll be there in just one hour," said the doctor, looking at his watch. Then he added, for the benefit of the party present, "There's nothing in the world the matter with Mrs. De Lancy, and by that time she'll have forgotten she sent for me." Ten minutes later came another call. It was the Collabones' domestic this time. "Little Jimmy's cut his hand, and Miss Ada can't stop the bleeding." "Say I'll come instantly," said he, springing from the table and making his excuses to the lady of the house.

Barclay's face shone with instant sympathy and interest. Dessert was nearly over. He turned to the motherly woman whose own gentle face betrayed her anxiety.

"Will you think me very rude?" he said. "You know I do not smoke, and I do want so much to meet those children. I feel that Ada purposely shuns me, and this is an opportunity

not to be lost. May I be excused? I will soon return." Mrs. Blythe's eyes were eloquent as she bade him go.

Three minutes later he softly entered the doctor's sitting-room. There in a big easy-chair sat a tall, sallow-faced, tumbled-haired girl, holding in her arms a burly little fellow whose frightened sobbings she had at last controlled, and who, with only an occasional whimper, was now submitting to the doctor's examination and deriving much comfort from his professional and reassuring manner.

"Why, this is no cut at all, Jimmy, my boy. The reason you bled so much is that you are so uncommonly healthy and full of blood. This won't keep you out of mischief six hours. Hold the basin steady, Purlina. Kick all you want to, Jimmy. Don't you dare to laugh, Kittie Blythe. Well, if here isn't Captain Barclay, too, come in to see you! Here is the little wounded soldier, captain. You had your arm in a sling six long months, didn't you? The Sioux did that for him, Jimmy, and you've only got to be done up in a bandage till to-morrow night. Let Captain Barclay hold you? Indeed I won't. He doesn't know how to hold little boys—like Ada. He's got no little boys, nor big Ada either. Bet your boots he wishes he had, Jimmy." Thus the doc-

tor chatted as he bathed and bandaged the pudgy little fist, while Jimmy lay, half relieved at the rapid termination to his woes, half resentful they should be declared so trifling, and, with eyes much swollen with weeping, critically studied the new captain's appearance and gave token of modified approval. But Ada's white lids and long dark lashes were never once uplifted.

Presently Collabone pronounced everything doing finely, and said he'd go and see Mrs. De Lancy. "You tell them there's nothing much the matter, will you?" he said to Barclay.

"I will—when I get there," was the smiling reply; "but I'm going to tell this little fellow a story first about a Sioux baby boy I knew in Wyoming, and his playmate, a baby bear." And, with wondering, wide-open eyes upon him, Barclay seated himself close to Ada's chair, while the doctor stole silently away.

Half an hour later, when he returned, a circle of absorbed listeners was gazing into Barclay's face. Ada only sat apart, and little Jimmy's curly head was pillowed on the story-teller's breast.

CHAPTER VI.

Ten days passed. Barclay had become an institution at Fort Worth, yet opinions were as divided and talk of him as constant as before he came. First and foremost, he had met Mrs. Winn, and his demeanor on that presumably trying occasion had proved a distinct disappointment. Winn was recovering health, if not spirits. A stage-load of officers and ladies had come from the cantonment to spend forty-eight hours, and a big dance was prescribed for their benefit. Mrs. Winn danced divinely, and never looked so well as when with a suitable partner on a suitable floor. Those were the days when we raved over the "Mabel," the "Guards," the "Maude," and the "Hilda" waltzes, Godfrey's melodious creations,—when the galop and *trois temps* were going out, and we "Boston dipped" to every tune from Pat Malloy to Five O'Clock in the Morning, and the Worth orchestra was a good one when the first violin wasn't drunk, a condition which had to be provided against with assiduous care. The party arrived during one of his lucid

intervals, and the adjutant promptly placed the artist under bonds to shun the cup until after the guests had gone; then he could fill up to his heart's content and no fear of a fine. Winn couldn't attend, but Laura was looking wan and sallow. She needed air and exercise, and her husband urged her to accept Mr. Brayton's escort and go; so did Collabone; so did her own inclination. Superbly gowned and coiffed and otherwise decorated, she went, and her entrance was the sensation of the evening. It was long after ten when she appeared. The hop was in full blast; the big room, gayly decorated, was throbbing with the rhythmic movement of the closing figure of the Lancers. Almost everybody was on the floor, for energetic were our dancers in those bygone days. Just as the music came to full stop, and with joyous laughter and merry words of parting the sets broke up, the women and girls, middle-aged or young (they never grow old in the army), clinging to their partners' arms, fanning, possibly, their flushed faces, were escorted to their seats, and the floor like magic was cleared for the coming waltz. The group at the flag-draped entrance parted right and left, making way for a young officer in cavalry uniform at whom nobody so much as glanced, because of the tall and radiant woman at his side, on whom all eyes were

centred. "Look at Laura Winn," was the whisper that flew from womanly lip to lip. "Isn't she simply superb?" "Look at Mrs. Winn," muttered many a man, his eyes lighting at the sight. "Isn't she just stunning?"

And then people began to hunt for Barclay.

He was standing at the moment talking quietly with Mrs. Frazier, who was making much of the young captain now, and was accused of having hopes of him on account of her eldest darling, who had dined by his side three different times at three different houses during the week, and was therefore said to be "receiving considerable attention." But the hush of laughter and miscellaneous chatter almost instantly attracted the matron's attention. She glanced at the door, gasped involuntarily, and then as suddenly turned and narrowly watched him, for he too noted the lull in conversation, and, slowly facing the doorway, saw before him not ten paces away the woman who was to have been his wife, gazing straight at him as though challenging him to look and be blinded, as blinded by her beauty he had been before. She was only a young, immature, untaught girl then, ignorant of her powers. Now the soft bloom was gone, but in its place there lurked among the tiny threads of lines or wrinkles just forming at the corners of her brilliant eyes,

and in the witching curves about her mobile, sensitive, exquisite lips, a charm beside which her virgin graces were cold and formal. She had been what all men called a wonderfully pretty girl. She was now what many women termed a dangerously beautiful woman, and she knew it well. When we had no one especially selected to "receive" in those days, it was a sort of garrison custom for everybody to present himself or herself to the wife of the commanding officer, in case that official was so provided. Mrs. Frazier was seated in plain view of the queenly creature who, having advanced a few steps beyond the portals and the loiterers there assembled, now halted, and like some finished actress swept the room with her radiant eyes, as though compelling all men, all women, to yield to her their attention and regard, and then, smiling brightly, beamingly (dutiful Brayton guided by the pressure of her daintily gloved hand), moved with almost royal grace and deliberation to where Mrs. Frazier sat in state; and the first lady of the garrison rose to greet her.

Unsuitable as is the full uniform for cavalry purposes to-day, it was worse in 1870, when our shoulders were decked with wabbly epaulets and our waists were draped with a silken sash that few men wore properly. But whatever might be said of Sir Galahad's shortcomings as a boon com-

panion, or of his severely simple and economical mode of life, there was no manifestation of parsimony in his attire. No man in the room was so well uniformed, or wore the garb of his profession with better grace. He who came in a flannel shirt and a rough gray suit, with a silver watch and leather watch-chain, appeared this night in uniform of faultless cut and fit, with brand-new glittering captain's epaulets, while his sash was of the costliest silk net, of a brighter red than generally worn,—most officers appearing in a stringy affair that age and weather had turned to dingy purple. On his left breast Barclay wore the badge in gold and enamel of a famous fighting division in a gallant corps; and such badges were rare in the days whereof I write. Moreover, though neither a tall man nor a stalwart, Captain Barclay was erect, wiry, and well proportioned, and his head and face were well worth the second look every one had been giving this night. "The Twelfth have been swearing like pirates at having another doughboy saddled on 'em," chuckled Captain Perkins, himself a doughboy. "Begad, the Twelfth has no better picture of the officer and the gentleman than this importation from the Foot." But no one spoke with the thought of being heard as Laura Winn finished her greeting to Mrs. Frazier. Every man and woman was in-

tent only on what was coming next, although many strove to speak, or to appear to listen, to their neighbors. Charlotte Frazier actually rose from her seat and stepped out into the room that she might have a better view.

And Barclay would not have been the observant man he had already shown himself to be had he not known it. His color was a bit high for one whose face was ordinarily so pale, but he stood calmly erect, with an expression of pleased contemplation in his fine eyes, waiting for Mrs. Winn to finish the somewhat hurried yet lavish words that she addressed to Mrs. Frazier; then she turned effusively upon him.

"Captain Barclay!" she exclaimed. "How very good to see you here! and how glad we all are to welcome you to the Twelfth! Mr. Winn and I have been in despair because his illness has kept him a prisoner. Indeed, I doubt if I should have left him at all to-night but for his positive orders—and the doctor's; then, of course, I much wanted to see you—too."

She had begun confidently, even masterfully. She looked him with determined effort straight in the face at the start, but her confidence flitted before a dozen words were said. Her voice faltered before she had half finished, for Barclay's eyes frankly, even smilingly, met hers, and with

ease and dignity and courteous interest all commingled he had bowed slightly over her hand, lowered it after a brief, by no means lingering, pressure, and stood, merely mentioning her name, "Mrs. Winn," and, as was rather a way of his, letting the other party do all the talking. It was a godsend to Laura Winn that the waltz music began at the next instant, for his nonchalance was something utterly unexpected. Oh, how dared he look so calmly, indifferently, forgetfully, almost unrecognizingly, into her eyes, and stand there so placidly, when her heart was fluttering wildly with nervous excitement, her words coming in gasps!

"Oh, Mr. Brayton, how heavenly!" she exclaimed. "Don't let us lose an instant of that waltz." Over his glittering shoulder she beamed in parting a bewitching smile, levelled all at Barclay, and glided away, a floating cloud of filmy drapery, a vision of flashing eyes, of flushing cheeks, of dazzling white teeth gleaming between the parted rose-leaves of her mouth, of snowy shoulders and shapely arms, of peeping, pointed, satin-shod feet, the handsomest creature in all that crowded room, and the most dismally unhappy. She had met him in the witnessing presence of all Fort Worth, and all the garrison saw that she had sustained a crushing defeat. She

who was to have been his wife and had duped him, she who had looked to subjugate him once more, was duped in turn, the victim of her own vanity.

"And to think," said Mrs. De Lancy, "she only changed her half-mourning a month ago, and now—in full ball costume!"

Fort Worth didn't stop talking of that episode for all of another week, and that, too, in the face of other interesting matter.

To begin with, Sergeant Marsden had disappeared as though from the face of the earth. Whither he had fled no man could say. No settlement worth the name had not been searched, no ranch remained unvisited. Fuller's people would not shield the fugitive, for Fuller, as the post sutler, suffered equally with Uncle Sam from the sergeant's depredations. Settlers and ranch people who bought of the latter cut into the business of the former, and Fuller would most gladly have had him "rounded up" long weeks ago; but Marsden and his few confederates in the garrison had admirably covered their tracks, and the indications of declining trade that had roused the sutler's suspicions led to no arousal of vigilance within the sentry line: wherefore Fuller's heart was hardened against the post commander and the erstwhile commissary, and this, too, at a time

when the latter stood in sorest need of financial help. The extent of poor Winn's losses and responsibility was now known: so far as his commissary accounts were concerned, not a cent less than three thousand dollars would cover them. The quartermaster was out a horse and equipments, and several confiding enlisted men and laundresses were defrauded of money loaned the dashing sergeant. Uncle Sam, be it known, has summary methods as a bill-collector. He simply stops his servant's pay until the amount due is fully met. Winn's total pay and emoluments as computed in '70 and '71 would barely serve in two years to square himself with his exacting Uncle. Meantime, what were wife and baby and other claimants to do? What was he to live on, and so insure payment of which his death would destroy all possibility? Crushed as Winn was, there were men and women who roundly scored his wife for appearing superbly dressed at the first ball graced by the presence of her discarded lover. Yet had she stayed away, their disappointment would have exceeded this disapprobation. Collabone said his patient suffered from a low fever, which the unprofessional found difficult to understand, in view of Mrs. Winn's diagnosis, which declared it alarmingly high. Certain it is that he kept his room until four days after the

evening of the ball; then he had to turn out and face the music, for orders came from "San Antone."

Then, too, came another invoice of interesting matter to Fort Worth, and it must be remembered that, in the narrow and restricted life of the far frontier, interest existed in matters that seem too trivial for mention in the broader spheres of the metropolis. The invoice was an actual and material fact, and consisted of a big wagon-load of household goods consigned to Captain Barclay, accompanied by a dignified Ethiopian and two very knowing-looking horses that had many of the points of thoroughbreds. The quartermaster's train under proper escort had made the long pull from Department Head-Quarters, and all unannounced came these chattels to the new troop leader. The very next morning, which was a Sunday, when Brooks's four troops formed line for inspection in the old-fashioned full dress of the cavalry, the men in shell jackets and plumed felt hats, the officers in long-skirted, clerical-looking frock-coats, black ostrich plumes, gold epaulets, and crimson sashes, there rode at the head of Lawrence's old troop a new captain, whose horse and equipments became the centre of critical and admiring eyes the moment it was possible for his comrades to leave their commands and gather

about him. Very few officers in those days possessed anything better than the regulation troop bridle and raw-hide McClellan saddle, which with their folded blankets satisfied all the modest requirements of the frontier. The light-batterymen indulged in a little more style and had picturesque red blankets to help out, but even they were put in the shade, and came trotting over during the rest after Brooks had made the formal ride round to look at the general appearance of his command. All hands seemed to gather in approbation about Barclay's charger. The horse himself was a bright, blooded bay, with jet-black, waving mane, tail, and forelock, superb head, shoulders and haunches, and nimble legs, all handsomely set off by a glistening bridle with double rein, martingale, glossy breast-strap and polished bits, curb-chain, bosses, rings, and heart, with the regimental number in silver on the bosses and at the corner of the handsome shabraque of dark blue cloth, patent leather, and the yellow edging and trimming of the cavalry. "The only outfit of the kind at Worth," said Brooks, emphatically. "And yet, gentlemen," he continued, seeing latent criticism in the eyes of certain of the circle, "it's all strictly in accordance with regulations, and just as we used to have it in the old days before the war. I wish we all had

the same now. I haven't seen a Grimsley outfit since '61."

"Grimsley it is," said the veteran captain of the light battery. "Mine went to Richmond in '61 with what we didn't save of our battery at First Bull Run."

"Grimsley it is," said his junior subaltern. "If Sam Waring could only see that, he'd turn green with envy to-day and borrow it to-morrow." Whereat there went up a laugh, for Waring was a man of mark in the queer old days of the army.

Then of course every one wanted to know, as the cavalcade rode from the drill-ground up to the post, where Barclay had bought his horses, and some inquired how much they cost; and to all queries of the kind Barclay answered, with perfect good humor, that he had ordered the equipments of the old firm of Grimsley, still doing business in St. Louis, as it did in the days when Jefferson Barracks and Leavenworth and Riley were famous cavalry stations in the '50s; the horses he had bought of a family connection in Kentucky, and had given seven hundred dollars for the pair.

"See here, Hodge," growled the old stagers as they clustered about the club-room, sipping cooling drinks after the warm morning exercise, "what's all this you've been telling us about Bar-

clay's inexpensive, economical, and skimpy ways? He's got the outfit of a British field-marshal, by gad!"

But Hodge was too much concerned and confounded to speak. "It's more'n I can explain," he said. "Why, he wouldn't spend ten cents in Wyoming."

And yet, had Hodge only known it, Barclay's infantry outfit was of just as fine finish and material, as far as it went, as these much more costly and elaborate appointments of the mounted service. Everything connected with the dress or equipments of his profession Barclay, who would spend nothing for frivolities, ordered of the best furnishers, and no man ever appeared on duty in uniform more precise or equipments of better make.

Of course the club-room was not the only place where Barclay's really bewildering appearance was discussed. Among the officers there were many who growled and criticised. It was all right to have handsome horses, if he could afford it: any cavalryman would try to do that, was the verdict. "But all these other jimcracks, they're simply moonshine!" And yet, as pointed out by Major Brooks, it was all strictly according to regulation. "Damn the regulations!" said Captain Follansbee; "they're too expensive for me."

And, take it all in all, the feeling of the mess was rather against than with Barclay; he had no business wearing better clothes or using better horse-furniture than did his fellows. Follansbee went so far as to tackle Blythe on the subject and invoke his sympathy, but that massive old dragoon disappointed him. "Barclay's right," said he; "and if the rules were enforced we'd all have to get them."

"But they cost so much," said Follansbee.

"Not half what you spend in whiskey in half the time it would take to get them here," was the unfeeling rejoinder.

Mrs. Frazier and Mrs. De Lancy, however, wished the captain had brought an easy open carriage with driving horses instead of saddlers. It would have been far more useful, said those level-headed women. And so it might have been—to them.

But in the midst of all the talk and discussion came tidings that amazed Fort Worth. Ned Lawrence was actually on his way back to Texas, —would be with his precious babies within the fortnight,—would reoccupy his old quarters for a while at least as the guest of the usurper, for they had been formally chosen by Captain Barclay, to the frantic wrath of Ada when first she heard the news,—wrath that sobbed itself out in

the lap of her loving friend Mrs. Blythe, as the motherless girl listened with astonished ears to the explanation.

"So far from raging at him, Ada, you should be thankful that your dear father and you and Jimmy have found so thoughtful and generous a friend as Captain Barclay. If he had not chosen your house, Captain Bronson would have done so, and you would have had to go. As it is, nothing of yours or your father's will be disturbed."

And sorely tempted was the enthusiastic, tender-hearted woman to tell much more that, but for his prohibition, she would have told; and yet she did not begin to know all.

CHAPTER VII.

Within the fortnight came poor Ned Lawrence back to Worth, and men who rode far out on the Crockett trail to meet the stage marvelled at the change three months had made in him. He had grown ten years older, and was wrinkled and gray. Winn was of the party, and Winn, who a month gone by was looking haggard, nervous, miserable, now rode buoyantly, with almost hopeful eyes and certainly better color than he had had for months, despite the fact that he had lost both flesh and color during his illness. Something had happened to lighten his load of dread and care. Something must have happened to enable Lawrence to take that long, long journey back to Texas. Fort Worth indulged in all manner of theories as to where the money was coming from, and Barclay, of course, was suspected, even interrogated. The frankest man in some respects that ever lived, Captain Galbraith Barclay was reticent as a clam when he saw fit to keep silent, and men found it useless to question or women to hint. As for Winn, he had but one classmate at the post, Brayton, who had never been one of his in-

timates at the Point, and, being rather, as was said, of the "high and mighty," reserved and distant sort with the subalterns he found at Worth on joining three winters before, Winn had never been popular. Lawrence was his one intimate, despite the disparity in years. And so no man ventured to ask by what means he expected to meet the demands thus made upon him. The board of survey ordered to determine the amount of the loss and fix the responsibility had no alternative. Winn and his few friends made a hard fight, setting forth the facts that the count had been made every month as required by orders and regulations, and that except by bursting open every bale, box, and barrel, and sifting over the contents, it would have been impossible to detect Marsden's methods. On some things the board was disposed to dare regulations and raps on the knuckles, and to let Winn off on several others; but what was the use? "the proceedings would only be sent back for reconsideration," said their president; and as it transpired that Winn had not exercised due vigilance, but had trusted almost entirely to his sergeant, they decided to cut the Gordian knot by saddling the young officer with the entire responsibility, which meant, sooner or later, a stoppage of nearly three thousand dollars of his pay.

It is a sad yet time-honored commentary at the expense of human nature that the contemplation of the misfortunes of our fellow-men is not always a source of unalloyed sorrow. There was genuine and general sympathy for Lawrence, because he had been poor and pinched and humbled for years, had worn shabby clothes, and had sought all possible field duty, where "deeds, not duds," as a garrison wit expressed it, seemed to make the man. He had frankly spoken of his straits and worries to such as spoke to him in friendship, and this, with his deep and tender love for his children, and his capital record as a scout leader, had won over to him all the men who at one time were envious and jealous and had cherished the linesman's prejudice against the fellow whose duties for years had kept him on the staff. The women were all with him, and that meant far more than may seem possible outside the army. There was many a gentle dame in the old days of adobe barracks who could be an Artemisia in the cause of a friend.

No one knew just what object Ned Lawrence had in coming back to Dixie. Every one knew he had indignantly refused the second lieutenancy, despite the fact that one or two men with war service and rank almost equal to his own had meekly accepted the grudgingly tendered com-

mission, and others were said to be about to follow suit,—all, presumably, with the hope that their friends and representatives in Congress assembled would speedily legislate them back where they thought they belonged. No one knew where Ned Lawrence had made a raise of money, but raise he certainly had made, for, to Blythe's indignation, there came a draft of one hundred dollars to cover the expenses, he said, of his children and old Mammy and to pay the latter some of her wages. The balance he would settle, he wrote, when he arrived. Blythe would far rather he had waited until his accounts were adjusted; then, if Lawrence were in funds, Blythe could have found no fault with this insistence on at least partially defraying the expenses incurred in providing for the little household. Lawrence hoped to have his accounts adjusted, his letter said, and he had reason to believe, from what friends in Washington told him, that he would find his successor willing to receipt to him for missing items, trusting to luck and the flotsam and jetsam of the frontier to replace them in course of time. Lawrence, indeed, was curious now to meet and know Captain Barclay, for he had been told many things that had gone far to remove the feeling of unreasoning antagonism he had felt at first.

Only one thing did he say to Blythe that threw light on his future plans. "I am dreadfully sorry," he wrote, "to hear such ill tidings about Harry Winn. I was always fearful there was something wrong about that fellow Marsden, and sometimes strove to caution him,—I, who could not see the beam in my own eye,—I, with two scoundrels in my orderly-room, trying to warn him against the one in his! Winn is a proud, sensitive, self-centred sort of fellow, whom wealth perhaps might have made popular. He is no better manager than I. He has a wife who could never help him to live within his means, as poor Kitty certainly tried to do with me." (Oh, the blessed touch of Time! Oh, the sweet absolution of Death! Kitty was an angel now, and her ways and means were buried with all that was mortal of her.) "And, worse than all, poor Hal has no one, I fear, to help him now, as—I write it with blinded eyes, dear Blythe—it has pleased God I should find in many friends in the days of my sore adversity,—you and your blessed wife, and the colonel, and Brooks,—even rough old Follansbee and our dilettante De Lancy, and that inimitable Collabone. My heart overflows, and my eyes, too, at thought of all you and they have done and said and written for me and mine. And here, too, where in my bitterness I thought I was

deserted of all, here is gallant old Front de Bœuf (you remember how we swore by him in the Valley after Davy Russell was killed). He has housed and fed and nursed and cared for me like a brother, and Senator Howe and even old Catnip —God bless him!—have worked hard for me; and, though my soldier days seem over for the time at least, my stubborn spirit has had to surrender to such counsellors and friends as they have been to me. They all say Congress will surely put me back next winter, and meantime 'Buffstick' says I'm to have a salaried position in a big company with which he is associated, and to begin work as soon as my health is re-established and my accounts straightened out."

"Who is Buffstick?" queried Mrs. Blythe, at this juncture.

"Buffstick? Oh, that was our pet name for Colonel Dalton, of the —th Massachusetts, Lawrence's friend and host in Washington; a magnificent fellow, dear, with a head and chest that made some lover of Scott liken him to Front de Bœuf,—out of 'Ivanhoe,' you know. But he was a stickler for neatness in dress and equipments, and his regiment called him Buffstick, and grew to love him all the same. He commanded a brigade after Cedar Creek, and now,—just think of it!—he's a capitalist."

"Does he know Captain Barclay, do you think?" she asked, after a reflective pause.

"I'm sure I don't know. Probably not," was the answer. "They never served in the same part of the army. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I was wishing—I couldn't help thinking —how much Mr. Winn needed some good friend, too."

"Winn and Lawrence are very different men," said Blythe, gravely. "Lawrence has made friends, while poor Winn has only enemies, I fear, and, really, none worse than himself."

Mrs. Blythe sighed as she turned away. It was much as her husband said. The Winns had come to the regiment after a round of receptions, dinners, and dances in their honor all the way from Washington to Worth, and had "started with a splurge," as the chroniclers declared. Laura's gowns and airs and graces won her no end of prominence, but very few friends. Winn's "high and mighty" ways, so they were termed by all the garrison, in which at that time only two or three West Pointers could be found, had alienated all the subs, most of the seniors, and many of the women. Their extravagance during the first year of service, the explanations and excuses tendered by Laura in the next, and Harry's increasing moodiness and distraction, served only

to widen the breach. Men and women both, who began by envying, turned to openly decrying. Cutting things were said to Laura, whose mendacities provoked them. Sneering or at least suggestive things were often said in presence of Winn, if not exactly to him; for there was one quality about the swell the garrison had to respect,—his cheerful and entire readiness to fight on very small provocation, and those were the days when the tenets of the "code" were not totally forgotten, and there still remained in the army a sentiment in favor of the doctrine of personal responsibility for disparaging words. There would be fewer courts-martial to-day were there more of it left. But when women heard the stories about the big bill at the sutler's and others that came by mail, and made little icy comments about some people being able to afford much more than *they* could, Laura laughed off the allusions to their superior style of living by stories of an indulgent papa, until papa's death left her without further resource from that quarter. Then she set afloat a fabrication about a doting aunt of Harry's who had no children of her own,—an amiable old widow who was to leave him all her money. He did have an aunt of that description, but she didn't have the money, and there were men who were malicious enough to refer in

Winn's presence to their wish that they had wealthy fathers-in-law or doting dowager aunts, thereby giving some other fellow a chance to say, "And so does Fuller, no doubt."

Indeed, so practically friendless were the Winns that among nine out of ten families along officers' row there was a feeling of lively curiosity to note the effect of this supposably crushing blow on the unhappy pair, and a consequent sentiment, only partially veiled in many cases, of keen disappointment when the news flew around the garrison that Mr. Winn had announced his readiness to meet the demand in full.

"Why, it can't be true," said many a woman. "I'll believe it when I see the money," said many a man. "Do you suppose—he could have accepted it from—Captain Barclay?" asked, in strictest confidence, Mrs. De Lancy of Laura's erstwhile intimate, Mrs. Faulkner.

"Not *Harry* Winn, probably," answered Mrs. Faulkner, in confidence equally inviolable, "but ——" and the pause that followed was suggestive. Follansbee and Bellows bolted down to the sutler's with the surprising news, wondering if Fuller could have been ass enough to advance the money. There was a time when he would have done so, perhaps, for he was one of the first to be enthralled by young Mrs. Winn's grace and

beauty, and lavished presents upon her—and upon Winn, of course—for a month, until Winn put a stop to the presents and Mrs. Fuller came post-haste back from San Antonio and put a stop to other manifestations. But Fuller had long since become estranged from the Winns,—the presentation of his bill at inopportune times having later widened the apparent breach. His jaw fell and his mouth opened wide when he heard the news, for Fuller had begun to believe that he would never get his money, and resented it that Uncle Sam should be luckier.

"Send up another 'bill rendered' by Ikey to Mr. Winn this afternoon," he bade his clerk, as the investigators departed to follow other clues. Fuller had gone down into his pockets, unbeknown to the post, and had actually pressed on Lawrence a loan of three hundred dollars, and bade him come for more when that was gone, but not a cent would he put up for Harry Winn,—not he; "the damned supercilious snob," was what Fuller now called him, not so much because he thought him a snob or supercilious or even deserving of damnation, as because he had allowed himself to be robbed of three thousand dollars' worth of goods that might otherwise have been purchased of him, Fuller, for double or treble the money. No, plainly, Fuller was not the angel

that had come to the rescue of Winn, nor could Follansbee or Bellows or the rest of the fellows find out who had. The mystery of Gilgal was outdone. Even Frazier and Brooks did not know, and when some one, possibly Mrs. Frazier, suggested to the colonel that as the commanding officer he really ought to know, the colonel did send for his new quartermaster and say to him, "Mr. Trott, as you are to receipt to Mr. Winn for the money value of his shortage, it would be well to be very circumspect. He probably cannot have that much in currency here. How does he propose to pay it?"

"I don't know, sir," said the man of business, promptly. "He says he will be ready to cover the entire amount on or before the 20th of May. I didn't like to ask him where it was to come from."

Neither did Frazier, despite no little prodding at home. Only one man ventured to speak of it to Winn, and, the resultant conversation having been variously and exaggeratively reported, the truth should here be told. It was at the club-room, which, for the first time in weeks, Mr. Winn entered. He asked for Major Brooks, and, finding him absent, turned to go out with no more than a nod to the party at the poker-table. That party was made up mainly of the class that was numerous in the army in those days and is

as rare as an Indian fight now. The least responsible among them at the moment was Lieutenant Bralligan, ex-corporal of dragoons, who could no more have passed the examination exacted of candidates to-day than a cat could squeeze through a carbine. "Hwat d'ye warrnt of the meejor, Winn?" he shouted. "Sure ye've got permission to ride out wid us to meet Lawrence."

Winn vouchsafed no answer. Bralligan and he were things apart, a reproach to each other's eyes, and the evil blood in the Irishman, inflamed already by whiskey, boiled over at the slight. "It's Barclay ye're looking for, not Brooks!" he shouted, in tempestuous wrath. "Faith, if ye want anything out o' the Quaker, let yer wife do the——"

Instantly a brawny hand, that of Captain Follansbee, was sprawled over the broad, leering mouth. Instantly there was a crash of chair-legs hastily moved, of grinding boot-heels as men sprang to their feet, of poker-chips flying to the floor,—a sound of oaths and furious struggles, for two of the party, with the attendant, had hurled themselves on the half-drunken lieutenant and were throttling him to silence, while Captains Bronson and Fellows sprang to head off Winn, who with blazing eyes and clinched fists came bounding back into the room.

"What did that blackguard say?" he demanded. "I did not catch the words."

"Nothing, nothing, Winn, that you should notice," implored Bronson. "He's drunk. He doesn't know what he is saying. He's crazed. No, sir," insisted Bronson, sternly, as Winn strove to pass him. "If you do not instantly withdraw I shall place you under arrest. Be sure that this poor devil shall make all reparation when he's sober enough to realize what has happened. Go at once.—You go with him, Fellows."

And so between them they got Winn away, and others soused Bralligan with *acequia* water and locked him up in his room and had him solemnly sober by afternoon stables, while, vastly to their relief, Winn with two or three cavaliers rode away at three o'clock to meet Ned Lawrence somewhere afar out on the Crockett trail. Greatly did Follansbee and Fellows congratulate Bronson, and Bronson them, on the fact that they had happened to be looking on at the game when Winn happened in and Bralligan broke out; for thereby they had stopped what might have been a most tremendous row. "All of which mustn't be known to a soul," said they.

But Bralligan's voice was big and deep. It was one of the causes of his unhallowed preferment in the days when second lieutenancies were showered

on the rank and file the first year of the war. Bralligan's taunting words, only partially audible to Winn as he issued from the front of the building, were distinctly heard by domestics lying in wait for a chance to borrow of the steward and pick up gossip at the back. By stables that evening the story was being told high and low all over the post; even the children heard with eager yet uncomprehending ears; and so it happened that just as the drums of the infantry were sounding first call for retreat parade, and the womenfolk were beginning to muster on the porches, and the warriors of the Foot along the opposite side at the barracks, and as Captain Barclay, a light rattan stick in his hand, came strolling back from stables, Lieutenant Brayton at his side, little Jim Lawrence made a dash from a group of children, and, in the full hearing of several officers and half a dozen women, a shrill, eager, childish voice piped out the fatal words,—

"Uncle Gal—Uncle Gal—what did Mr. Bwalligan mean by telling Mr. Winn to send his wife to you for money?"

Laura Winn herself was on the nearest piazza at the moment, stunningly handsome, and posing for a bow from her next-door neighbors as they came by. She and every other woman there distinctly heard the words and marked the effect.

Sir Galahad's face flushed crimson. He caught his little friend up in his arms and held him close to his burning cheek. "Hush, Jimmy boy. He meant nothing, and soldiers never repeat such nonsense. Run to sister Ada and help her get everything ready for papa's coming. Think, Jimmy, he'll be here by tattoo." And with a parting hug he set the youngster down at his door-step and started him on his way. Then, courteously raising his cap to the gathering on the nearest porch, and noting, as did they, that Mrs. Winn had disappeared within her hall, Barclay quickly entered his own portal, and nabbed Brayton as he was making a palpable "sneak" for the rear door. The youngster found escape impossible. Will he, nill he, the boy told the story as it had been told to him, Barclay standing looking straight into his eyes, as though reading his very soul, yet never saying a word beyond the original, "You heard what Jimmy said. It is another instance of 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,' Brayton. Now, tell me exactly what you know."

It was a warm May evening. A hot south-wester had been blowing from the broad valley of the Rio Bravo, and the few men in the club-room at nine o'clock were demanding cooling drinks. Bralligan was there, looking somewhat solemn

and sheepish. He knew that nothing but the presence of senior officers had prevented a serious fracas as the result of his asinine bray that morning, but, now that Winn was out of the way and the matter in the hands of his captain, he had no dread of the thrashing he deserved, and was disposed to an exhibition of bravado. A drink or two added to his truculence, as well as to his desire to resume the game interrupted that morning. There were always in those days a few reliable gamblers at the big frontier posts, and presently Bralligan, in his shirt-sleeves, was contemplating a sizable pile of chips and bantering a burly captain to "see his raise," when suddenly he became aware of a distracted look in the eyes of the group about the table, and, glancing towards the door, his own blood-shot orbs lighted upon the trim figure of Captain Barclay, standing calmly surveying the party,—Barclay, who never smoked, drank, or played cards, and who was reported to have started a movement for prayer-meetings among the enlisted men. His very presence in that atmosphere was ominous, especially as the gaze of his usually soft brown eyes was fixed on Bralligan. One or two men said, "Good-evening, captain," in an embarrassed way, but the Irish subaltern only stared, the half-grin on his freckled face giving place to an uneasy leer.

On a bench to the left of the entrance stood a huge water-cooler, with gourds and glasses by its side. Underneath the spigot was a big wooden pail, two-thirds full of drippings and rinsings. Without a word, the new-comer stepped quietly within the room, picked up the bucket, and, striding straight to the table before Bralligan could spring to his feet, deftly inverted the vessel over the Irishman's astonished head, deluging him with discarded water and smashing the rim well down on his unprotected shoulders. An instant more, and Bralligan sent the bucket whirling at his assailant's head, which it missed by a yard, then, all dripping as he was, followed it in a furious charge. Sir Galahad "side-clipped" with the ease and nonchalance of long but unsuspected practice, and let fly a white fist which found lodgement with stunning crash straight under the Irishman's ear, felling him like an ox.

CHAPTER VIII.

And so Ned Lawrence got back to Worth to find it far livelier than when he left it. The stage with its joyous escort had come trundling in just before tattoo, and first and foremost the returning wanderer was driven to his own doorway and left for half an hour with Ada and Jimmy—the one sobbing with joy, the other laughing with delight—on the father's knees. Then Mrs. Blythe stole in to bid them to the waiting supper, and, pending Lawrence's reappearance somewhere along the line, the officers gathered in low-voiced groups discussing the startling event of the evening. Bralligan, raging for the blood of the double-dashed, triple-adjectived hound who had assaulted him, had been lugged home by two or three of his kind, consoled by Captain Mullane with the assurance that he'd see that the preacher gave him full satisfaction in the morning, for, with native love of a ruction, Mullane stood ready to bear the subaltern's challenge, even though his better nature told him the ducking was richly deserved: with Irish honor in question, Mullane was for fight.

Frazier and Brooks, of course, said the seniors present, must not be allowed official knowledge of what had taken place, though in those benighted days of magnificent distances from the centre of civilization and the exploring grounds of reporters of the press, many a stirring row was settled without its ever being heard of beyond the limits of the garrison in which it occurred. Captain Barclay, contenting himself with the one blow, despite an unchristian impulse to follow it up with a kick at the sprawling figure, had stood calmly by when Bralligan's associates lifted him, half stunned, to his feet, then, addressing himself to Mullane, with just the least tremor in his voice and twitching to his muscles, remarked, "Of course you know what led to this, sir. If your lieutenant desires to follow it up, you can find me at my quarters." Then, looking very deliberately around upon the little circle of flushed or pallid faces,—there were only five officers present,—he slowly turned, walked away, and shut himself in his room.

A light was still burning there when Brayton tiptoed in at half-past ten. He, with several other cavalrymen, had been sitting in the major's parlor, listening to Lawrence's tale of his experiences in Washington. Winn had rejoined the party late, and one glance at his face was enough

to tell Brayton that somewhere he had heard of the fracas at the club-room. Brayton's boyish heart was bubbling over with pride and delight in this new and unlooked-for side to his captain. Every day of his service with that officer only served to strengthen the regard and admiration Brayton felt for him. Barclay had made no pretence of being a cavalryman on the strength of his assignment to that arm. He started with the assertion that he had everything to learn, and then surprised his subaltern by an extensive knowledge of what we then called "the tactics." He was certainly not as much at home in saddle as on foot, and did not pretend to be, but he was by no means a poor or ungraceful rider. He had a light, gentle hand, at least,—a thing much harder for most men to acquire than a good seat. He was very cool, just, and level-headed with the members of the troop, not a few of whom thought to "run it" on the "doughboy" captain; but all such projects had flattened out within the fortnight after his coming. Barclay might not know horses, but he did know men, and the first sergeant was the first to find it out,—the new captain calmly and almost confidentially pointing out to him, after ten days of apparently casual glancings over the mess-room and kitchen, that the men were not getting their proper allowance

of coffee, and that the savings made on the rations did not all go where they belonged.

"Boy an' man, sorr," began Sergeant Sullivan, oratorically and with fine indignation, "I've sarved in the dragoons or cavalry the best fifteen years of me life, and this is the furrst time me honor's been called into account. I shall tindher me resignation at wanst."

"I have had its acceptance in contemplation for some days, sergeant," was the calm response. "But first we'll overhaul the accounts."

"Currnel Larns's, sorr, would niver have treated an ould soldier in this way."

"That, I fear, is true," was the imperturbable response, " and as a consequence the colonel appears to have been robbed right and left,—your own name being brought into question. That will answer for the present, sergeant."

And when the troop heard that Denny Sullivan had been "broke" and was to be tried by court-martial for thieving, great was the comment excited, and the men began to wonder what manner of doughboy was this, after all, that had come to them,—the doughboy that ould Denny had so confidently counted on running to suit himself. But this didn't begin to be all. A very acute trailer was Galahad. Those were days in which only a subaltern, and not always even a subaltern,

was expected to appear at morning stables; but the new captain liked to rise early, he said. He was up with the sun or earlier, and hoof- or wheel-tracks about the stables before the herd was led forth to water never escaped his attention, yet apparently never excited remark. Within the third week, however, another non-commissioned officer was suddenly nabbed, and so was a wagon-load of forage, going off to a neighboring ranch at four o'clock in the morning. Meantime the men noted that their coffee and rations were better and more bountiful, and soldiers are quick to receive impressions that come by way of the stomach. "The new captain is knocking out the old abuses," said they, and it was wonderful how soon the ex-doughboy made his way into their good graces. There had been some disposition on the part of the wits in other companies to refer to Barclay's men as "The Parson's Own" when it was announced that the captain had attended the chaplain's evening service, but even that was beginning to die out, when all of a sudden it was noised abroad this evening that the redoubtable Bralligan had been felled by a single blow of that Quaker fist.

Brayton was fairly quivering with excitement this night of nights, and could not sleep. He longed to see his captain and hear his version of

the affair, but the door was tightly closed instead of being invitingly open, and he dared not intrude. Not one word had been said about the matter at the major's, but Brayton knew it would soon be known even to the officer in command. So long, however, as it was not reported to him officially, Frazier would probably let the affair take its course. Bralligan deserved the knock-down, and doubtless would be glad enough to let the matter end there. But, thought Brayton, if he should demand satisfaction, and Barclay's religious or conscientious scruples were to prevent his acceptance, "*then* comes my chance," for the youngster himself proposed to take it up. He had no scruples. He had been longing for a chance to kick that cad Bralligan for over a year, and after all it was Barclay that got it.

Eleven o'clock, and Barclay's light still burned. Eleven-thirty, and still, reading or writing, the captain seemed occupied in the old poker room, and the door remained closed. Once or twice Brayton heard him moving about, and in his own excitement and interest the boy found it impossible to think of anything else. Twelve o'clock came. He was beginning to undress and prepare for bed, still uneasily watching the light shining through the crack of the door, when his straining ears caught the sound of a footfall underneath his

window. It opened on the yard, and the sill was only five feet or so above the ground. A hand was uplifted without and tapped gently on the sash, and as Brayton drew aside the curtain Harry Winn's face was revealed in the moonlight.

"Come to the porch in front," he muttered low. "I must speak with you."

Brayton was out on the dark piazza in half a minute. He found Winn nervously pacing the boards.

"I told my wife I had to come out and think quietly awhile," he said, as he extended a hand to his silent classmate. "She heard of this—this damnable business almost as quick as it happened. That girl of ours hears everything and tells anything. There's no doubt about it, I suppose. You were there? You heard it at once, didn't you? What does—*he* say?" And Winn's nod indicated that he meant Barclay.

"Nothing," said Brayton, briefly. "I haven't seen him——".

"But he's up. The light's in his window. He's writing—or something. Look here, Brayton, you know what's got to come of this. That damned Irishman must challenge him, or be cut and kicked about by all his kind in the cavalry. It isn't Barclay's fight; it's mine. The more I think of it the more I know that, contemptible a

blackguard as Bralligan is, he is still an officer of the regiment. He has been knocked down, and has the right to demand the only satisfaction there is for a blow. You know it as well as I do. What I've got to do right here and now is to take that fight off Barclay's hands, and you've got to help me."

"S'pose he don't want it taken off his hands," said Brayton, sturdily. "He told him plain enough he was ready to meet any demand——"

Winn reddened even in the pallid moonlight. "I say no man in this garrison fights on my wife's account except me—or with me. They're up with Bralligan now, two or three of them, and I want you to go there with me at once as my witness. I mean to cowhide him to-night. Then if he wants a meeting in the morning, I'm his man." And as he spoke Winn thrashed nervously at the railing with the stout whip he carried in his hand.

"That won't fix it," answered Brayton, "and you ought to have sense enough to know it. Barclay has the precedence. The Mick couldn't challenge you until he'd fought him—or been refused a fight. You go to bed, Winn," and Brayton spoke even lower. "Your wife must have heard you just now, and first thing you know Barclay will hear you, and"—with almost comical irrele-

vance—"you don't want to meet him this way, when you haven't even called on him."

Winn reddened again. There was a tinge of bitterness in his tone as he answered,—

"Don't trouble yourself about Mrs. Winn's hearing. She's placidly asleep—long ago. As for my not calling, you know I've only been out of my bed three days or so, and Captain Barclay must understand that a man burdened as I have been is in no mood for social observances. This is all begging the question. You're the only man I can ask to be my second. Finish your dressing now and come."

"Winn, I won't do it," said Brayton, with flat-footed decision. "This is my captain's affair, and, from what I've seen of him since he joined, I'm bound to say what's his is mine. Besides, you've got no business mixing up in the matter. You've got your wife to think of, and you've got that commissary business to straighten out. Barclay and I have no encumbrances of either kind." At the moment, I fear me, the young gentleman could have added, "Thank God!" for, with all his appreciation of the physical perfections of his classmate's wife, Mr. Brayton was keenly aware of her many extravagances.

"Of course I've a wife," answered Winn, hotly. "It's because of her I feel bound to take this up.

As for that commissary money, every cent will be here to square the shortage, whether I am or not. I'll tell you what others—— No! I can't even tell you, Brayton. But an old friend of my father's has offered his help. Now, once more, will you come or not?"

"No, Winn. You know well enough I'd see you through if—— Hush! There's Mullane and some one else coming out of his quarters now."

"Then, by God! I'll go alone," exclaimed Winn, "and it's got to be done before they get away." And he would have gone springing down the steps, but Brayton seized and held him.

"For God's sake, Harry, be quiet to-night. Don't go near him. Quiet, man! Can't you see? Those fellows are coming this way now!"

True enough, Mullane and his companion, who had issued from the fourth set of quarters down to the left, turned northward the moment they reached the walk, the moonlight gleaming on the buttons of their uniform frock-coats, but the sight and faint sound of scuffling on Winn's porch seemed to attract their attention. They stopped as though to reconnoitre, and just then the front door of Brayton's hall opened wide, and, with the broad light at his back, Captain Barclay stepped quietly forth.

"Brayton," he said, "you left the door ajar,

and it was impossible not to hear the latter part of this conference.—Mr. Winn, I presume," he continued, with calm, courteous bow, as the two young men, unclasping, turned and faced him. "I infer that you purpose going to Mr. Bralligan's quarters—now. Let me urge that you do nothing of the kind. Brayton is right. I see that, late as it is, some of their party are moving this way. Pray remember that as yet this is entirely my affair."

There was no time for other answer than a bow, a mumbled word or two, an embarrassed acceptance of the hand extended by the captain. Just as he said, Mullane and his friend were coming rapidly up the walk. They passed the Winns' gate, entered that of Brayton, and then it appeared that Mullane's friend was the ubiquitous Hodge, that Mullane was manifestly in his glory, and that both were perceptibly in liquor.

"Gintlemen," said the doughty captain, halting at the foot of the steps and raising his forage-cap with magnificent sweep, "gintlemen, I am the beerer of a missige from me frind Mr. Bralligan. Have I the honor of addhressin' Captain Barclay?" Fondly did Mullane imagine that he impressed his hearers as did Sir Lucius O'Trigger; and much did he remind one of them, at least, of Captain Costigan of blessed memory.

"This is Captain Barclay," that gentleman answered, in low tones, with a smile of amusement at Mullane's grandiloquent prelude, yet stepping quickly forward to meet the envoys. Winn could not but note that the captain's movement accomplished at once two objects. It left him and Brayton in the shade; it kept Mullane and Hodge in the moonlight and off the steps. "Pardon my suggesting that a lady sleeps in the front room aloft there, and that you speak low, so as not to disturb her. Where is your message?"

This was trying. Mullane loved his chest tones as he did his whiskey. His low voice was apt to be thick and husky and unimpressive, and tonight he was over-weighted with the sense of the gravity and importance of his mission, if with nothing else.

"Sorr," he said, with another flourish of the cap, "in accordince with the practice of gintlemen in the old arrumy, I am the bearer of a verrbal missige——"

The Quaker captain had already amazed the old dragoon sergeants by the intricacy and extent of his knowledge of their manners and customs. Now came a surprise for the officers.

"Pardon my interrupting," he said. "I do not assume to instruct in such matters, but there is manifestly only one kind of message 'according

to the customs of the old army,'" and here he smiled quietly, "that should come from Mr. Bralligan now, and it must come in writing. I decline to recognize any other." Here Brayton nudged Winn approvingly, but the subalterns maintained a decorous silence.

"I've niver hurr'd of a challenge being refused on that account," said Mullane, majestically, "and if me wurreds are not sufficient, here's me frind Mr. Hodge——"

"Your words are not brought into question, Captain Mullane, but the manner of your message is. Let your friend put it in writing, and it will be received. Good-night to you, sir."

And, to Mullane's utter amaze and confusion, quickly followed by an explosion of wrath, Captain Barclay coolly turned and walked within-doors.

"Hould on dthere!" cried Mullane, as he started to spring up the steps, but Brayton stepped in front of him, and Hodge nervously grabbed his arm. Neither knew much of the "code" of the old days, but each had learned that Barclay rarely made a mistake. Winn, too, tall and strong, stepped in front of the angry Irishman as he broke out into expletives. "No more of that here, captain," he cried, forgetful of any consideration of rank. "This noise will wake the

post. Rest assured your principal will get all the fight he wants;" and then, with growing wrath, for Mullane was struggling to come to the steps, "so will you, by God, if you advance another foot."

"Winn—Winn, for heaven's sake, I say!" cried Brayton, seizing the uplifted arm. "Go home, Mullane. Damn it, you're in no shape to handle such a matter to-night. Go home, or I swear I'll call the officer of the day. He's coming now!" he exclaimed; and it was true, for the sound of excited voices had reached the adjoining quarters, and out from the doorway, sashed and belted, came the massive form of Captain Blythe, his sabre clanking on the door-sill. Out, too, from Winn's hallway shot a broad beam of light, and hastening along the porch came a tall, graceful form in some clinging rose-tinted wrapper, all beribboned and fluffy and feminine. The men fell away and Mullane drew back as Mrs. Winn scurried to her husband's side and laid her white hand on his arm. Forth again on the other side of Winn came Barclay, and his deep tones broke the sudden silence.

"Captain Mullane, leave this spot instantly," he ordered, stern and low. "I'll answer to you in the morning."

"Come out of this, Mullane," demanded

Blythe, striding in at the gate. "Delay one second, and I'll order you under arrest."

Up slowly went Mullane's cap with the same incomparable sweep. "In the prisince of leedies," said he, "I'm disarrumed. Captain Barclay, I'll see ye in the marrnin'."

But when the marrnin' came both Mullane and his principal, beside bewildering headaches, had graver matters to deal with than even a very pretty quarrel.

CHAPTER IX.

From the night of her brilliant appearance at the garrison ball, not once had Mrs. Winn an opportunity to exchange a dozen words with Captain Barclay. Her husband, as has been said, had failed to call on his new next-door neighbor, although Winn had been well enough to be about for several days, and until he did call it was impossible for Barclay to enter their doors, and expedient that he should avoid Mrs. Winn wherever it was possible to do so. This might not have been difficult, even though the same roof covered both households,—that of the Winns on the south and that of the Barclay-Brayton combination on the north side,—but for Laura Winn herself, who seemed to be out on the porch every afternoon as the captain came walking back from stables; and the women who were apt to gather at Mrs. Blythe's at that time declared that there was something actually inviting, if not imploring, in the way Mrs. Winn would watch for him, and bow, and seem to hover where he could hardly avoid speaking to her. Three times at least since that memorable party had she been there "on

watch," as Mrs. Faulkner expressed it, and though his bow was courtesy itself, and his "Good-evening, Mrs. Winn," most respectful, and even kindly, if one could judge by the tone of his voice, not another word did he speak. He passed on to his own gateway, Brayton generally at his side, and his stable dress was changed for parade uniform or dinner before he again made his appearance.

After the manner of the day, most of the cavalry contingent stopped in at the club-room on the way back from evening stables. Brayton used to do so, but, though no one could say his captain had preached to him on the subject, some influence either of word or of example had taken effect, and the young bachelor seemed entirely content to cut the club and the social tipple, and to trudge along by his new companion's side. They had been getting "mighty thick" for captain and second lieutenant, said some of the other officers; but, serenely indifferent to what others thought or said, the two kept on their way.

"Thought you were goin' to wear mournin' for Lawrence the rest of your natural life, Brayton; and here you are tyin' to Barclay as if Lawrence had never lived," said Mr. Bralligan, only a day or two before Lawrence's return, and Brayton

started almost as though stung. What Bralligan said was not half as ill grounded as most of his statements, and Brayton was conscious of something akin to guilt and self-reproach. In common with most of the regiment, he had felt very sore over Lawrence's going. He had been much attached to that gallant and soldierly captain, but now that another had taken his place, and he could compare or contrast the two, the youngster began to realize with something like a pang of distress—as though it were disloyal to think so—that in many ways Barclay was "head and shoulders" the superior man. Lawrence never rose till eight o'clock except when in the field. Lawrence rarely read anything but the papers and interminable controversies over the war. Lawrence, despite the claims of Ada and little Jimmy, often spent an evening at the club, and always stopped there on his way from stables. Lawrence never studied, and off the drill-ground never taught. Indeed, almost all the drills the troop had known for months and months Brayton himself had conducted. No wonder the boy had wasted hours of valuable time. No wonder there was a little game going on among the youngsters in Brayton's "back parlor" many a day. He had simply been started all wrong.

But even before Barclay's books were unpacked

the new captain had found means to interest the young fellow in professional topics that Lawrence had never seemed to mention. Barclay had evidently been taking counsel with progressive soldiers before joining his new regiment, had been reading books of their choosing, and among others was a valuable treatise on the proper method of bitting horses, and he found that here was a matter that Lawrence and Brayton had never thought of and that Brayton said was never taught them at the Point,—which was strictly true. To the amaze and unspeakable indignation of Denny Sullivan, who was soon to be overhauled on graver points, the doughboy had taken his lieutenant from horse to horse in the troop as they stood at rest during drill, and shown him at least twenty bits out of the forty-five in line that were no fit at all. He showed him some that were too broad from bar to bar and that slid to and fro in the tortured creature's mouth; others that hung too low, almost "fell through;" others whose curb-chain or strap, instead of fitting in the groove, bore savagely on the delicate bones above it and tormented the luckless charger every time his rider drew rein. Barclay gave the boy his own carefully studied hand-book; not another cavalry officer then at Worth had read it, though several had heard of it. The youngster was set to work

fitting new bits by measurement to the mouth of every horse in the troop.

Then Barclay drew him into the discussion of the cavalry system of saddling as then prescribed, —the heavy tree set away forward close to the withers,—and Brayton could only say that "that was tactics and the way they'd always done it." But Galahad pointed out that the tactics then in use were written of a foreign dragoon saddle with a long flat bearing surface. It was all very well for that to be set as far forward as it would go, because even then the centre of gravity of the rider would be well back on the horse. "But," said he, "you take this short McClellan tree, place that away forward, and then set a man in it; his centre of gravity will rest in front of the centre of motion of the horse,—will throw the weight on the forehand and use up his knees and shoulders in no time." This, too, set Brayton to studying and thinking, while Mullane and Fellows declared Sir Galahad a crank, and even Brooks and Blythe, wedded to tradition, thought him visionary. Then when the books came, Galahad unpacked, and just where the poker-table used to stand it stood now, but it was covered with beautiful maps of Alsace and Lorraine, and Galahad's desk with pamphlets sent him from abroad, the earliest histories of the memorable

campaign about Metz and Sedan. The next thing Brayton knew he was as deeply interested as his captain, and, lo, other men came to look and wonder and go off shaking their heads,—those of them who were of the Mullane persuasion sneering at those "book-generals," while others, like Blythe, pulled up a chair as invited and followed the junior captain through his modest explanation with appreciative eyes. Those were days when there was all too little time for study and improvement, thanks to the almost incessant Indian scouting required; but here was Worth, a big post, and here was a four-troop battalion with a gentleman and not a bad soldier at its head, and it had not occurred to him to teach them anything or to require of them anything beyond the usual attention to stables, troop-drill, and an occasional parade. If his men were reasonably ready to take the field in pursuit of Kiowa, Comanche, or horse-thief, and to furnish escort for ambulance and train when the disbursing officers went to and fro, that was all that could be expected of him or them in those halcyon days. And now "this blasted doughboy substitute" had come down here and was proposing to stir them all up, make them all out "so many ignoramuses," said Mullane. "Bedad, the thing is revolutionary!" And that was enough to damn it, for revo-

lution is a thing no Irishman will tolerate, when he doesn't happen to be in it himself.

Still another thing had occurred to make Barclay something apart from the bachelors. No sooner had his modest kit of household goods arrived than the unused kitchen of Brayton's quarters was fitted up; Hannibal was ensconced therein; a neat little dining-room was made of what had been designed for a small bedchamber on the ground-floor, and Barclay amazed the mess by setting forth champagne the last evening he dined there as a member, and then retired to the privacy of his own establishment, as he had at Sanders. The Winns' house-maid had of course dropped in to see how Hannibal was getting along, and dropped out to tell her discoveries, which were few. Then Brayton found the mess saying things about Barclay he could not agree with, and he, too, resigned and became a messmate of his captain,—a change for the better that speedily manifested itself in the healthy white of his clear eyes and a complexion that bore no trace of fiery stimulants such as were indulged in elsewhere. Then there was talk of others leaving the "Follansbee family" and asking to join at Brayton's, and this gave umbrage to Erin as represented in the bachelors' mess. And so an anti-Barclay feeling had sprung up at the post, among

the unlettered at least, and these were days in which the unlettered were numerous. "Sorry for you, Brayton, me boy," grinned the senior sub of Fellows's troop. "It must be tough to come down to this after Lawrence." And he was amazed at Brayton's reply.

"Tough? Yes, for it shows me how much time I've wasted."

"Wait till we get Galahad out on the trail wid his new-fangled bits and seats," sneered Mullane but a day or two before. "That'll take the damned nonsense out of him. Faith, whin he goes I hope I may go along too to see the fun."

And, sooner than he thought for, the Irish captain had his wish.

One o'clock had just been called off by the sentries, and the moon was well over to the west, when the door of the major's quarters was opened and he with his lingering guests came forth upon the broad piazza, the red sparks of their cigars gleaming anew as they felt the fan of the rising breeze. Clear and summer-like as was the sky, there was a reminder of the snow-peaks in the wings of the wind, and Lawrence huddled his old cavalry cape about his shoulders as he faced it. He was talking eagerly, perhaps a little bombastically, of this great new mining company in which Buffstick was prominent as a director. He

was full of hope and anticipation and disposed to patronize a trifle his friends who, wedded to the humdrum of the army, were debarred from so fine an opportunity of making money in abundance. So many of the number were going to do so much in the same way when first they left us for the broader paths of civil life.

"I tell you, Brooks," he said, enthusiastically, "I wouldn't take ten thousand dollars cash this night for my chance of making twice that sum within the year. Buffstick turns everything he touches into gold."

"Wonder if Barclay knows these mines," said De Lancy, reflectively, flipping the ashes from the end of his cigar. "He has never opened his head about his mines to a soul. We don't know where they are."

"I don't know," said Lawrence, briefly. Even yet the mention of Barclay chafed him a bit. "I know this, though, that that company wouldn't offer me any such salary as twenty-five hundred dollars a year just to boss their men, unless there was big money in it somewhere. It's the first time I ever knew what it was to be indifferent to the coming of the paymaster. By the way, he ought to be here day after to-morrow, or to-morrow night in fact; it's long after twelve now. The escorts were warned as we came along."

"I think it a mistake," said Brooks, gravely, "to let any one know beforehand when the paymaster is to start. That Friday gang probably musters a hundred by this time. It's where all our thieves and deserters go. I haven't a doubt your old sergeant has joined them by this time, Lawrence. I believe that's where Marsden's gone, and that we'll hear from them in force again before we're a month older. They've kept reasonably quiet all winter, but June isn't far off. I'm blessed if I would want to make that trip from San Antonio with forty thousand dollars in greenbacks with less than a big troop of cavalry to guard it."

"He's got more money than that this time," said Lawrence. "Most of these men have four months' pay due them; so have the cavalry along the route. He has two other posts to pay. Hallo!" he cried, breaking suddenly off, "what's all the light about down at the sutler's? Here comes the sergeant of the guard."

Running diagonally across the parade, the moonlight glinting on his buttons and accoutrements, an infantry non-commissioned officer was speeding towards the quarters of Captain Blythe, near the upper end of the row; but, catching sight of the group at the major's, he suddenly swerved and came straight towards them, spring-

ing over the gurgling *acequia* and the dusty roadway and halting at the gate.

"What is it, sergeant?" asked two or three voices at once.

"I was looking for the officer of the day, sir. Is he here?"

"Over at his quarters, probably. What's amiss?"

"There's two of Fuller's men in, sir, from Crockett,—just about played out. They swear that not an hour after sunset the whole Friday gang—it couldn't have been anything else—came a-riding out from the foot-hills over towards the Wild Rose and kept on to the southeast. They saw the dust against the sky and hid in the rocks away off to the east of the trail, and they swear there must have been fifty of 'em at least."

He had hardly time to finish the words when the sutler himself came galloping over the parade, "hot foot," on his wiry mustang, and drew up in front of the gate. "Has the sergeant told you?" he asked, breathlessly. "It's Reed and his partner,—two of the best men on my ranch,—and they can't be mistaken. You know what it must mean, gentlemen. The gang is after the paymaster, and I think Colonel Frazier should know at once." No wonder Fuller was breathless, bareheaded, and only half dressed. Anywhere from

thirty to forty thousand dollars might be diverted from its proper and legitimate use if that Friday gang should overpower the guard and get away with it. His coffers were filled with sutler checks redeemable in currency at the pay-table, as was the wonted way of the old army. It was a case of feast or famine with Fuller, and he poured his tale into sympathetic ears. Brooks himself went over to the colonel's, and found that weasel of a chief already awake. Mrs. Frazier didn't allow galloping over her parade in the dead of the night without an attempt to detect the perpetrator. That vigilant dame had more than once brought graceless skylarkers to terms, and the *quadrupedante putrem sonitu* of Fuller's mustang represented to her incensed and virtuous ears only the mad lark of some scapegrace subaltern, who perchance had not been as attentive to 'Manda as he should have been, and she was out of dreamland and over at the window before Fuller fairly drew rein.

"What is it, Brooks, me boy?" asked Frazier from his casement, as did gallant O'Dowd of his loyal Dobbin. "I'll be down in a minute." By the time he reached the door Fuller had hurried up his stiff and wearied scouts, and in the presence of a little party of officers the story was told again, and told without break or variation. There was

only one opinion. The scattered outlaws had easily got wind of the coming of the paymaster with his unusual amount of treasure, and, quickly assembling, they were heading away to meet him far to the southeast of the big post, very possibly planning to ambuscade the party in the winding defiles of the San Saba Hills. Not a moment was to be lost. For the first time the full weight of his divorce from all that was once his profession and his pride fell on Ned Lawrence, as for an instant the colonel's eyes turned to him as of old, —the dashing and successful leader of the best scouts sent from Worth in the last two years. Then, as though suddenly realizing that he had no longer that arm to lean on, old Frazier spoke:

"Why, Brooks, you'll have to go. I can't trust such a command to Mullane, and it'll take two companies at least."

And twenty minutes later, answering the sharp summons of their veteran sergeants, the men of Mullane's and Barclay's troops were tumbling out of their bunks and into their boots, "hell-bent for a rousin' ride," and the old captain of Troop "D" was saying to the new, "Captain Barclay, may I ask you for a mount? I've been longing for two years past for a whack at this very gang, and now that the chance has come I cannot stay here and let my old troop go."

And all men present marked the moment of hesitation, the manner of reluctance, before Barclay gravely answered, "There is nothing at my disposal to which you are not most welcome, Colonel Lawrence; and yet—do you think—you ought to go?"

"I could not stay here, sir, and see my old troop go without me," was the answer.

Few were the families at Fort Worth that were not up and out on the piazzas or at the windows to see Brooks's detachment as it marched away in the light of the setting moon just as the stars were paling in the eastern sky; but the merciful angel of sleep spread her hushing wings over the white bed where two children lay dreaming, and never until the troopers were miles beyond the vision of the keen-eyed sentries did Ada know that the loved father, restored to her but a few hours before, was once more riding the Texan trail, soldier sense of duty leading on, and God alone knowing to what end.

CHAPTER X.

The day that broke on old Fort Worth thus late in a sunshiny May proved one of deep anxiety. There was no telegraph wire then to connect it with the distant head-quarters of the department. If there had been it would have been cut six times a week. There was no way of waving back the coming convoy or of signalling danger. Crockett Springs lay a long day's ride to the southeast, and the little troop of cavalry there in camp was looking for the coming of no call upon it for duty until early on the morrow it should supply the paymaster and his party with breakfast, the ambulance with fresh mules and driver, and the night riders of the escort with their relief. Forty troopers from Crockett Springs would take the place of those who had come from the San Saba, and trot along with the paymaster until, somewhere about midway to Worth, they should meet the forty sent out the previous night to bivouac on the prairie and be ready to take up the gait and keep it until the man of money and his safe were well within the limits of the reservation. But the fifty-mile stage

from Crockett to the southeast was the worst on the long line. The road wound over the divide to the valley of the San Saba, and on the way had to twist and turn through defiles of the range of hills, where more than a dozen times Indians and outlaws had defied the little detachments of cavalry scouting after them. The worst part of the pass lay some twenty miles beyond the stage station at Crockett Springs. Neither Indians nor outlaws, to be sure, had been heard of in that neighborhood for several months, but that proved nothing. It was easy for the latter to sweep from their supposed fastnesses in the Apache range to the west, and, issuing from the Wild Rose Pass, to water miles below the springs and then line the rocks in the heart of the San Saba Pass, without a trooper being the wiser. Forty cavalrymen, as Lawrence knew, would be the major's escort from the camp on the Rio San Saba beyond the range. Forty men disciplined and organized ought ordinarily to be able to cope with any band of outlaws to be found in Texas. But when, as was now reasonably certain, this far-famed Friday gang had received accessions from the troops themselves and had welcomed the deserters and desperadoes so frequently sloughed off from the soldier skin of Uncle Sam in the days close following the great war, there was grave reason for precaution, and

graver still for anxiety. Question as he might, Frazier could not shake an atom of the original statement of Fuller's men. Fifty mounted outlaws, at least count, with a dozen led horses, they had seen through their field-glass far over the prairie, pushing southeastward from the direction of Wild Rose Pass of the Apache range, straight for the lower valley through which ran the little stream that had its source at Crockett Springs.

So there were anxious hearts at Worth, for, while it was felt that Brooks would lose no moment and was well on his way at four o'clock of this bright Sunday morning, he had still some sixty miles to traverse before he could get to Crockett, rest and bait his men and horses, pick up Cramer's troop there camped, and then push ahead for the San Saba, where he expected to find the outlaw gang disposed in ambuscade, confidently awaiting the coming of their prey.

Now, Brooks had men enough to thrash them soundly, but unless he caught them in the act of spoliation he lacked authority. Just as sure as he pitched into a force of armed frontiersmen, they would appeal to the courts, and public sentiment would be dead against him. He could doubtless push ahead through the range, careless of lurking scouts of the would-be robbers, meet Major Pennywise and his protectors, and escort them

back in safety. That problem presented no great difficulty; but what Frazier wanted and Brooks wanted and everybody, presumably, wanted was that the outlaws should be caught in the act and be punished then and there. The question was how to catch them in the act without being themselves discovered, and before the gang had had time to inflict much damage on the paymaster's party. There was the rub. "Why, their first volley, delivered from ambush, might kill half the outfit and the paymaster too," said Frazier. "No, we dare not risk it, Brooks. Push through and pull him through, that's the best we can do—unless," and here came the redeeming clause, "unless on the way you should light on some unforeseen chance. Then—use your discretion."

Mounted on the very horse he used to ride as troop commander, and with the old familiar horse-equipments, Ned Lawrence left the post at the major's side. He had slept as only soldiers can, curled up in the stage-coach, during the previous afternoon, and was in far better trim for the long ride in saddle than Captain Mullane, who with bleary eyes and muddled head rode *solus* in front of the leading troop, his one lieutenant, Mr. Bralligan, being reported by Dr. Collabone's assistant as sick in quarters, which indeed he was, with a lump the size of an apple on the side of his head,

and another, apparently the heft and density of a six-pounder cannon-ball, rolling about inside of it. "D" Troop, jogging easily along at the rear of column, was led by Barclay and Brayton, both of whom had marked the absence of the subaltern of the leading company, and neither of whom was surprised when ten miles out there came galloping past them, with a touch of the hand to his hat-brim, the late regimental commissary, Lieutenant Harry Winn.

"That's good!" said Brayton, as he saw his classmate ride up to the major and report, then fall back and range himself alongside Mullane. But Barclay was silent.

"You think he ought not to have come?" asked Brayton, half hesitatingly, as he glanced at his silent leader.

"I'm thinking more of others—who should be here," was the answer. "Yet those two have so much to leave." And Brayton, following the glance of his captain's eyes, fully understood.

The morning grew warm as the sun began to climb above the distant low-lying hills to the east. The dust soon rose in dense clouds from beneath the crushing hoofs, and, leaving Brayton with the troop, Barclay cut across the chord of a long arc in the trail and reined up alongside the major. The command at the moment was moving at a

sharp trot through a long, low depression in the prairie-like surface. Brooks returned the captain's punctilious salute with a cheery nod and cordial word of greeting.

"With your permission, sir, I will fall back a hundred yards or so, divide the troop into sections, and so avoid the dust."

Brooks glanced back over his shoulder. "Why, certainly, captain," said he. "I ought to have known the dust would be rising by this time. It's eight o'clock," he continued, glancing at his watch. Barclay turned in saddle and signalled with his gauntlet, whereat Brayton slackened speed to the walk, and a gap began to grow between the rearmost horses of Mullane's troop and the head of "D's" already dusty column.

"Ride with us a moment, won't you, Barclay?" called the major, significantly, as his subordinate seemed on the point of reining aside to wait for his men. "I want you two to know each other." And the new and the old captain of "D" Troop, who had courteously shaken hands with each other when presented in the dim light of the declining moon at four o'clock, now trotted side by side, Lawrence eying his successor with keen yet pleasant interest. He had been hearing all manner of good of him during the wakeful watches of the night, and was manfully fighting against the

faint yet irrepressible feeling of jealous dislike with which broader and better men than he have had to struggle on being supplanted. Do what he might to battle against it, Lawrence had been conscious of it hour after hour, and felt that he winced time and again when some of the callers spoke even guardedly of the changes Barclay was making in the old troop, changes all men except the ultra-conservative ranker element (as the ranker was so often constituted at that peculiar time, be it understood) could see were for the better.

"You and Barclay lead on, will you, Ned?" said the major, in his genial way. "I wish to speak with Mullane a moment." Whereat he reined out to the right and waited for the big Irishman to come lunging up. Mullane was already spurring close at his heels, gloomily eying the combination in front. "There are Oirish and Oirish," as one of their most appreciative and broad-minded exponents, Private Terence Mulvaney, has told us; and it galled the veteran dragoon to see his junior in rank bidden to ride even for the moment at the head of the swiftly moving column. So, reckless of the fact that his individual spurt would call for a certain forcing of the pace along his entire troop, now moving in long column of twos, Mullane had spurred his

horse to close the twelve-yard gap between himself and the major's orderly, determined that there should be no conference of the powers in which he was not represented.

"Captain Mullane," said Brooks, "I see it is getting dusty. You might divide into sections, as 'D' troop has done, and keep fifty yards apart, so that the dust can blow aside and not choke your men."

"This is 'L' Troop, sorr, and my men are not babes in arrums," was Mullane's magnificent reply. At any other time he might have felt the pertinence of the suggestion, but here was a case where a doughboy captain, bedad, had instigated the measure for the comfort of his men. That was enough to damn it in the eyes of the old dragoon. The answer was shouted, too, with double intent. Mullane desired Barclay to hear what he thought of such over-solicitude; but Barclay, riding onward sturdily if not quite so easily as was Lawrence, gave no sign. He was listening, with head inclined, to the words of the keen campaigner on his right.

Brooks was quick to note the intention of the Irish officer, and equally quick to note the flushed and inflamed condition of his face, the thickness of his tongue. "So ho, my Celtic friend," thought he, as he saw that two canteens were

swung on the off side of Mullane's saddle, one at the cantle under the rolled blanket, the other half shaded by the bulging folds of the overcoat at the pommel, "I suspected there was more whiskey than wit in your eagerness at the start; now I know it."

But even to Mullane the major would not speak discourteously. "We all know 'L' Troop is ready for anything, captain," he smilingly answered, "but I have to call for unusual exertion to-day, and the fresher they are to-night the better. Let them open out, as I say," he continued; and Mullane saw it was useless to put on further airs.

"You 'tind to it, sergeant," he grunted over his shoulder to his loyal henchman, and then, uninvited, ranged up alongside the leader.

The prairie was open here; the road split up into several tracks from time to time, and the men could have ridden platoon front without much difficulty for two or three miles. Away to the southeast the ground rose in slow, gradual, almost imperceptible slope to the edge of the far horizon, not a tree or shrub exceeding a yard in height breaking anywhere the dull monotony of the landscape. Eastward, miles and miles away, a line of low rolling hills framed the dull hues of the picture. Northward there was the same

almost limitless expanse of low, lazy undulation. To the right front, the south and southwest, the land seemed to fall away in even longer, lazier billows, until it flattened out into a broad valley, drained by some far-distant, invisible stream. Only to the west and northwest, over their right shoulders, was there gleam of something brighter. The faint blue outline of the far-away Apache range was still capped in places by glistening white, while straight away to the northwest, back of and beyond the dim dust-cloud through which the swallow-tailed guidons were peeping, hovered over their winding trail the bold and commanding heights, Fort Worth's shelter against the keen blasts that swept in winter-time across the prairie from the upper valley of the Rio Bravo. Four hours out, and just where the road dipped into that broad deep swale a quarter-mile behind the rearmost troopers,—just where the wreck of one of Fuller's wagons and the bones of two of Fuller's mules and the soft spongy mud to the west of the trail told how the waters could gather there in the rainy season and evaporate to nothingness when needed in the dry,—a solitary stake driven into the yielding soil bore on bullet-perforated cross-board the legend, "20 miles to Worth and only 20 rods to Hell."

Only twenty miles in four hours, with fresh

horses and the cool of the morning, and a paymaster with forty thousand dollars in deadly danger some sixty to eighty miles away. Slow going that, yet scientific. Not another drop of water could those lively chargers hope to have until they reached the springs at Crockett, forty miles away. Thrice has Brooks halted for brief ten minutes' rest, the resetting of saddles, etc., and now, after fifteen minutes' lively jog, he signals "walk" again, and glances back to watch the march of his men. By this time the column is long drawn out. The two troops are split up into four sections each, riding a little over a dozen men in a bunch; by this means they are relieved from the ill effects of the choking clouds of dust. Mullane halts with the major. It pleases him to convey the impression to his men that Brooks can't get along without him. A big pull at his pommel canteen, ten minutes back, has temporarily braced him, and he wants to talk, whereas Brooks, intent on the duty before him, wishes to think.

"Hwat time will we make Crockett's, major?"

"Not before five or five-thirty," is the brief answer.

"'L' Troop can do it in two hours less."

"So could 'D,' if it hadn't to push on again at nightfall." Brooks answers in civil tone, despite

the hint conveyed by the brevity of his words, despite the conviction that is growing on him as he somewhat warily glances over his companion, that what "L" might do its captain won't do if he consults that canteen again. Two silent but keen-eared orderlies are sitting in saddle close beside their respective officers, and it will not do to give his thoughts away.

Then Mullane tries another tack. He seeks confidential relations with his chief; and when an Irishman has a man he is jealous of to talk about and whiskey to start him, he needs no supply of facts; they bubble from his seething brain, manufactured for the occasion.

"The Preacher was caught where he couldn't get out of it," says he, with a leering wink at the leading horseman. "Is he larnin' his thrade from Lawrence, afther robbin' him av his throop?"

And now Brooks fires up unexpectedly. Turning quickly on the Irishman with anger in his eyes, the major bends forward over the pommel. "Captain Mullane," he says, so low that the nearby troopers fail to catch his words, so distinctly that the captain cannot fail to, "there are things of more value in a trade than the tricks of it that you seem to know so well. You can learn more from Captain Barclay that is worth knowing than you can ever teach him, and I'll listen to no slur

at his expense. You've been drinking too much, Mullane. Take my advice and pull the stopper out of that canteen and put one on your tongue."

The Irishman boils up with wrath. The idea of Major Mildmanners pitching into him—him, that was once the pride of the Second Dragoons! —and praising that white-livered parson! Whurroo! Mullane at the moment could have flung commission and conscience to the wind, everything but that canteen. Nothing but the stern and icy stare in Brooks's usually benignant eye represses the outburst trembling on the tangling tip of his tongue.

"If you knew—what I know, sorr, that man'd not be ridin' wid his betthers," he begins, "and it's this night that'll prove me wurrds."

CHAPTER XI.

It was at four o'clock of a blistering afternoon, twelve hours from the time of their start from the post, that the leaders in the long-extended column hove in sight of a patch of green down in a distant depression to the south that marked the site of Crockett Springs. Beyond it, hemming the broad, shallow valley, there rose a long wave of bare, desolate heights, rounded and billowing in soft and graceful contours as they rolled away northeastward, abrupt and jagged towards the south and southwest, where the stream seemed to have torn a pathway for the sudden torrents of the springtide that foamed away towards the broader valley of the Bravo. At the point where, rounding the nose of a low ridge, the trail twisted into view of Crockett's, the major halted to look back over his command, still tripping steadily onward in little bunches, each a dozen strong, each followed by its own little dust-cloud, each independent, apparently, of the others, yet moving as part of one harmonious train. Foremost, the group at the head of column had received accessions. Fuller, the sutler, finely

mounted and bristling with arms of the latest and most approved pattern, backed by two sun-tanned Texans from his ranch, had overtaken the command at noon, bent on sharing its fortunes in the tussle anticipated with the outlaws; and they were now riding with "head-quarters," from which, on the other hand, two figures were missing,—Lawrence and one of the orderlies. As early as two o'clock the ex-captain had pushed on ahead, a double object in view, to warn Cramer's troop of the coming of the Worth command and the tidings they bore of the Friday gang, also to have a little party mount at once and gallop northeast, ten miles to the Saba trail,—a short cut from Worth to the San Saba Pass, used by horsemen in the rainy season. Captain Cramer might or might not have received warning of the appearance of the gang in the valley below his camp at the Springs; but the "Fridays," whoever their leader, would certainly have friends and confederates on the watch near Worth, friends who would probably take that very short cut and gallop at speed to warn the gang of the coming vengeance. Oddly enough, it was not Brooks nor Lawrence who was first to think of this, but Barclay. It was his modest suggestion at the noon halt, a suggestion that was put in form of a question, that had opened the major's eyes. "I re-

member, sir," said he, "that the Springs lie in a sort of elbow; the trail runs nearly east and west for many miles beyond them, and nearly north and south on this side. Is there no way in which scouts could gallop across our left and give warning to those fellows?"

"By Jove!" said Brooks, "there's the old San Saba cut-off. What had we better do, Lawrence?" And Lawrence said, "Send at once a sergeant with a set of fours to the left, until they cut the trail, in order to prevent information going to the gang that way, and to report if any horsemen have already passed, which latter any old frontiersman can tell at a glance." Mullane, lurching drowsily in saddle all through the last stage, had thrown himself on the turf and gone sound asleep the moment the column halted. Only with extreme difficulty could he be aroused and made to understand what was wanted. Mr. Winn, standing silently by, turned his back on his temporary commander. He knew the Irish captain was well-nigh swamped with liquor, and he had no wish to bear witness against him. Those were days so close to the war that officers, old and new, still thought more of what a man had done than of what he was doing, and Mullane had been a gallant trooper. "You 'tind to it, sergeant," was again the Irishman's com-

prehensive order to his first sergeant when at last he grasped the significance of Brooks's words, and five horsemen rode away at the lope to the left front the moment the column again mounted. Again did Brooks see fit to caution his leading troop commander. "I am afraid you have sampled that whiskey once too often, Mullane. No more of it now, or you'll go to pieces when you are most needed," he muttered, then rode on to the head of column.

And the prediction came true. At the very next halt Mullane had fallen into a stupor so heavy that it was found impossible to rouse him. The assistant surgeon with the column made brief examination, then unslung and removed the canteen at the captain's pommel, and whispered his conclusion,—"Better leave his horse and orderly here with him."

"Then," said the major, briefly, "Winn, you command 'L' Troop." And when again the column mounted, Barclay rode back and directed his leading section to incline to the right, so that they passed the lonely little group, the two horses placidly cropping at the scant herbage, the orderly squatting with averted face, filled at once with shame and sympathy, the recumbent figure sprawled upon the prairie, its bloated red visage buried in the blue-sleeved arms. Barclay's rear-

ward sections instinctively followed the lead, and only furtive glances were cast, and no audible comments made. The ranks were full of tough characters in those days, yet imbued with a strange fidelity in certain lines that reminds one of the dog immortalized by Bret Harte at Red Gulch,—the dog that had such deep sympathy for a helplessly drunken man. There was nothing in their code to prevent their stealing from Uncle Sam, their captain, or any other victim, but to hint that an officer or a friend was drunk would have been the height of impropriety.

Winn, not Mullane, therefore, led "The Devil's Own," as Mullane's troop—together with others, no doubt—had been appropriately designated. Barclay followed at the head of "D." When nearing Crockett Springs at five o'clock, a dim speck of courier came twisting out upon the trail to meet them, and Brooks long after recalled the thought that came to him as he read the despatch that reached him there. It was from Lawrence:

"Cramer got wind of the gang early this morning, followed with thirty men into the San Saba, had sharp fight, lost three men and many horses, and is corralled out there, about fifteen miles southeast. Cramer himself wounded, Dr. Augus-

tin killed. Courier says most of Friday gang gone to San Saba Pass. You, of course, must push on to save Pennywise and his money. I take five men and horses here and hasten to pull Cramer out of the hole. Think you now justified in attacking gang wherever found. No doubt who were Cramer's assailants. Expect to reach him before six and have one more square fight out of Texas. Hastily,

"L."

"By heaven," cried Brooks, as he turned to Fuller and the little party riding with him, all studying his face with anxious eyes, "it's lucky we got here with our horses in good shape. Cramer is in a scrape somewhere out in the Range. Lawrence has gone to his aid, and there'll only be time for a bite at Crockett's; then we must push on and go ahead to the Pass." Then, dropping into thought, "Now, which of Laura Waite's victims will most welcome a square fight,—the man she wronged by dropping, or the man she wronged by taking?"

Two hours later, refreshed by cooling draughts from the brook that bubbled away from the Springs, their nostrils sponged out, their saddles reset, their stomachs gladdened by a light feed, the horses of the two troops seemed fit for a

chase, despite their sixty-mile march since dawn. A courier, galloping ahead, had borne Brooks's directions that coffee should be ready for his men, and Cramer's camp guard had found time to add substantials to that comforting fluid. Only half an hour did the major delay, but even in that time the horses had a quick rub-down with wisps of hay, and the men themselves swung into saddle with an air that seemed to say, "There's fun ahead!" The sun was shining aslant from low down in the western sky as the column once more jogged away on the dusty trail, Barclay's troop now in the lead, opening out just as it had marched most of the day, while Winn, between whom and the new captain there had passed a few courteous yet rather formal words at one or two of the halts, gave to Mullane's old first sergeant the charge of the leading section, and himself rode at the distant rear of column, for by dusk, if at all, straggling would be likely, and straggling would have to be suppressed with a firm hand. The sun was at their backs now: away to the front lay the rift in the hills through which wound the San Saba road, and off to the right front, well to the southeast, somewhere among those jagged bluffs just beginning to tinge with gold about their sharp and saw-like crests, lay the scene of Cramer's morning tussle with the out-

laws, who, as all now realized, must have opened on him from ambush and shot down several horses and not a few men before the troopers could reply. No further news had come from him, however. The courier who brought the first news said he had to run the gauntlet, although only a few of the gang seemed to be hanging about the scene of the fight,—their main body, as he had previously reported, having gone in the direction of the Pass. Brooks well knew that the moment he reached the foot-hills he would have to move with caution, throwing out advanced guards and, where possible, flankers. He knew that he would need every man, and believed that Cramer's people, now that Lawrence had gone to join them, could take care of themselves; but the courier's story, told to eager ears, had "told" in more ways than one. His description of the ambuscade, the way Cramer, the doctor, Sergeant O'Brien, and others at the head of column were tumbled at the first fire, all had tended to make the head of Brooks's column an unpopular place to ride,—at least less popular than earlier in the day. Fuller and his men decided that their horses would be the better for an hour or two of rest at the cantonment, and so the column moved on without them.

Longer grew the shadows and loftier the range

far to the front, as once more the pace quickened to the trot, and Brooks and his men jogged on. The doctor, a gifted young practitioner whom Collabone held in high regard, seemed still to think that he should have been allowed to take an orderly and his instruments and gallop out on Lawrence's trail to the aid of Cramer's wounded. "Then what is to become of mine?" asked the major, calmly. "I'm sorry for Cramer, sorry his doctor is killed, but we may need you any moment more than he does. No, Lawrence has gone to him; he'll do what he can to make the wounded comfortable, leave a small guard with them, and then guide the rest of Cramer's troop through the range to the San Saba, join either Pennywise's party or ours, and between us we ought to give those fellows a thrashing they'll never forget,—if only they'll stand and take it,—if only," he added below his breath, "they don't lay for us in some of those deep twisting cañons where twenty men could overthrow a thousand."

The doctor admitted the force of his superior's argument, and said no word. All the same, however, his eyes kept wandering off from time to time towards the foot-hills at the southeast, now turning to violet in shade, "like half-mourning," said the doctor to Galahad, as, only half content, he dropped back to ride a few moments at the

latter's side. "And it won't be long," he added to himself, "before they'll be shrouded in deep black. Pray God there's no ill omen in that!"

And now the road began to rise, very slowly, very gently as yet, but perceptibly, towards the still distant range. The long, spindle-shanked shadows of the horses had disappeared. The sun, yellow-red, was just sinking below the horizon through the dust-clouds in their wake, when one of the foremost troopers, close at Barclay's heels, muttered, "It's somethin' movin', anyhow, and what is it if it ain't a horse?" And Barclay and the doctor, turning in saddle, caught his eye. "I seen it a minute ago away out yonder towards them buttes," continued the soldier, pointing out across the prairie to their right front, "and I couldn't be sure then. It's comin' this way, whatever it is, comin' fast. Look, sir! There it is again!"

And with all their eyes Barclay and the doctor gazed, but could see no moving object. Only the rolling prairie, growing darker, dimmer every minute, only the sun-tipped ridge and buttes and shining pinnacles far away towards the San Saba. And still the relentless trot went on, and the major's head was never turned; yet his orderly, too, was ducking and peering from time to time off to the southeast, just where the trooper had

pointed. Barclay, cautioning his sergeant to keep a steady trot, spurred forward, the doctor following.

"What do you see?" they asked, and the orderly too stretched forth a grimy gauntlet.

"Thought I saw a horse, sir. Some of 'K' Troop's, maybe, for there was no rider."

With this corroborative evidence, Barclay hailed the major. "Major, may I send a man or two out in that direction?" he asked. "Two of our people report seeing a horse galloping this way."

But, even as he spoke, over a distant divide, popping up against the sky just long enough to catch the eyes of half a dozen men at once, a black dot darted into view and then came bounding down the long, gradual incline, looming larger and larger as it ran; presently the body and legs could be made out, and then the sweeping mane and tail,—a riderless horse, a cavalry horse probably, coming at eager speed to join his comrade creatures in the long column. Cavalry horse undoubtedly, as, bounding nearer and nearer, the flapping rein, the dangling, black-hooded stirrups, the coarse gray blanket, and the well-known saddle could be distinguished, a gruesome sight to trooper eyes, harbinger of disaster if not of death in almost every case,—a cavalry

charger riderless! And at last, as with piteous neigh the laboring steed came galloping straightway on, a cry went up from two or three soldier throats at the instant, a wail of soldier sorrow: "God save us, fellows! it's Blarney—it's the colonel's own!" Officers and men, they swarmed about the weary, panting, trembling creature, as hope died in every heart at what they saw: the saddle and blanket, the old overcoat, rolled at the pommel, that so often had stood between Ned Lawrence and the Texas gales, were all dripping with blood, yet Blarney had never a scratch.

CHAPTER XII.

The moon was throwing black shadows into the deep cleft in the San Saba, where the Crockett trail twisted along beside the swift-running rivulet, that rose in the heart of the hills and bubbled merrily away until lost in the westward valley and the brook that found its source at the springs far out under the foot-hills towards the Bravo. Slowly, wearily, warily, half a dozen troopers on jaded horses were feeling their way up the pass, a veteran corporal full thirty yards ahead of his fellows leading on. With the advance rode an officer whose shoulder-straps, gleaming on the shell jacket sometimes worn in the mounted service immediately after the war, seemed almost too bright and new to accord with the dust-grimed chevrons and trimmings of his comrades. New and brilliant, too, were the hilt and scabbard of the sabre that dangled by his side. New and "green" the men of his command had believed him to be, in cavalry matters at least, when first he joined them some weeks before, but the most casehardened old customer among their seasoned troopers had abandoned that view before

ever they started on this scout after a gang of notorious outlaws, and now a new and very different theory was grinding its way into their tired brains,—that the "Doughboy Dragoon," as they had earlier dubbed him, "Captain Gallyhad," as one of them heard he was called, could give them points in covering the front of a column that were worth knowing, even if they had been learned in a doughboy regiment and among the Sioux. It would be a smart "Friday" that managed to ambuscade old Brooks's column that cloudless, moonlit, breezeless night, for, with that veteran's full consent, as well as to his infinite relief, Captain Barclay had himself gone forward with the advance the moment they began to wind in among the hills, and there at the post of danger he had held his way, alert and vigilant, despite long hours in saddle that had told heavily on more than half the command, calm and brave despite the fact that their welcome to the westward portal of the Pass was the sight of poor Blarney running to them for shelter, sympathy, and companionship, covered with the blood of his beloved rider.

And what was that rider's fate? It was now almost eleven o'clock, and no man knew. Only briefly had they halted and flocked about the panting steed, for stern was the need that held them to their course. With awe-stricken faces

and compressed lips they looked into each other's eyes, as though to ask, What next? Who next? The major, tender-hearted as a woman, well-nigh choked with distress and anxiety as he turned to Barclay for counsel; and long before the rearmost of the column had reached the spot the decision had been made. The leaders were again pushing on. Young Brayton, with half a dozen troopers, had been despatched southwestward along the *falda*, ordered to search high and low for Lawrence, dead or alive. There was only one theory,—that, pushing eagerly ahead to the relief of Cramer's crippled troop, the gallant ex-captain had taken no thought of personal danger; the old instinct of leadership had possessed him, and, foremost of his little squad, he had been picked off by lurking bushwackers of the outlaws, crouching like Indians in the shelter of the rocks, and had fallen another victim of their desperado efforts. "One more fight in Texas," indeed. Poor, brave, warm-hearted Ned! That one more fight, reported in Washington by an indulgent department commander, might bring about immediate measures for his restoration to the army; but was it worth the risk? Was it worth what might befall those motherless children, praying for father hour after hour that livelong day? Should it have been permitted, had there been

any one to prevent, in view of the fact that no longer was there soldier duty to lead him on? The government had released him from all that, had bidden him go. It had no further use for the services of such as he; it had turned him loose upon the world, with heavy stoppages against the stipulated *bonus*. "Oh, what right had he," cried Brooks, "to forget those babies back at Worth, well knowing as he must that no man's life is worth a hair in front of the rifles of that outlaw gang, much less an enemy such as Lawrence has shown himself to be?" The major's heart and head were heavy as once more the order forward was given. With every inclination to turn from his course with his entire command, to hasten in search of Lawrence's little party and Cramer's halted men, he well knew that should the paymaster and his precious thousands fall into the outlaw hands of the Friday gang he would be held responsible, even though San Saba's cantonment sent with him a force of forty men.

Once within the jaws of the Pass, the little detachment had closed on the head of column, the advance guard, Barclay's leading section, riding on and dispersing itself under his instructions, while Brooks held the other sections until Winn's men were all closed up, bringing with them the little squads that had scouted towards the short

cut of the San Saba and had found no living soul in sight, yet had followed fresh hoof-tracks coming their way for miles. Whoever they were, the scouts of the gang were well ahead; whoever he was, "Friday" by this time knew the troops were coming. Then, with the flankers scouring the slopes well out to right and left wherever possible, Brooks's main body too had entered the winding defile and was lost in the bowels of the earth.

At eleven o'clock a watcher, gazing back into the broad shallow depression in which lay Crockett's, and then northward to the low-lying hills along the trail to Worth, could have seen no gleam of light far or near that would speak of human habitation or life or movement, no sign, in fact, of life of any kind; yet no sooner was the last shadowy form of horse and trooper swallowed up in the black gloom of the defile, no sooner had the last faint click of iron-shod hoofs died away in the hidden distance, than there slowly rose from behind the shelter of a clump of rocks, far out to the right of the trail, a crouching figure that went almost on all-fours to the edge of the rivulet, slunk away down the bank, dodging swiftly, softly, from boulder to boulder, until it disappeared around a little shoulder of bluff five hundred yards away, was lost to view a moment,

then reissued into the moonlight, this time in saddle, swinging, cowboy fashion, a *riata* about its head as it rode. Spinning up the slopes and out of the stream-bed, away it went, careering up the billowy rise to the south, and was presently lost to view a second time behind some castellated rocks along the crest. Three minutes more, and these began to glow along their eastward face with the light of some unseen fire that flared for perhaps a minute somewhere about the hidden base of the group, and then, far away to the southeast, far out among the buttes and knolls in the heart of the range, there was a sudden flash of brilliant light, just as though some one had touched off in front of a reflector a pound or so of rifle powder. The hills for one second were lighted up, then as suddenly relapsed into gloom. The blaze at the ledge so close at hand was promptly doused, and the night rolled on, calm, placid, and unbroken.

When the first streak of dawn crept into the orient sky, Barclay's shadowy scouts were issuing from the San Saba on the farther side and halting for the coming of the main body. Neither those who led the advance nor those out on either flank, where flankers were at all possible, had seen a sign of outlaw, cowboy, even of human being, outside their own array. Not only had the Friday gang vanished from the neighborhood of the

Pass, but, what was most mysterious, not a sign had appeared of paymaster or escort, who were due at Crockett's early this very morning. Brooks, picking out the lightest rider in his weary column, sent him on the liveliest horse to warn Pennywise and his escort, provided he could find him at the San Saba camp, of what had taken place, notify him that they would here await his coming, and meantime ordered dismount, unsaddle, and graze, and in two minutes every charger was divested of his load, and many of them were kicking and rolling on the turf.

Twenty-four hours had the command been in saddle, except for the required halts and a long two hours during the dead of night, when leading their wearied steeds or crouching beside them at rest, while Barclay and his scouts explored the overhanging heights and listened eagerly for sound of coming troopers from the eastward. But for the waning moon there would have been hours of total darkness. Ninety miles, all told, had they travelled, and now, wearied though they were, nine out of ten of the men were chafing with wrath that the wily gang had managed to escape them. Whither were they gone, and where on earth was the paymaster, were the questions. Certainly not through the Pass, for there were no fresh hoof-prints. Could it be that,

balked in their plan to overwhelm the escort by this coming of at least an equal force, the gang had turned back angered and thrown themselves on Cramer's crippled party with the view of getting away with the horses, arms, and equipments? Certainly none of Cramer's people had made their way by the game trails over the range to join them, but there was reason for that: Lawrence had never succeeded in reaching Cramer.

Sad, wearied, and depressed, Major Brooks seated himself on a saddle-blanket to take counsel with his officers, now reduced to three,—Barclay, Winn, and the doctor. He missed Mullane, stanch old fighter that he was, for Mullane knew most of the country thoroughly, and had been posted for months at the Rio San Saba, now only some twenty miles to the east. He sorely missed Lawrence, for on him he had often leaned. He was beginning to take vast comfort in Barclay, to be sure, but now Barclay, Winn, the doctor, men and horses, the entire command, in fact, had come to a stand-still. There was no use in going farther east; there the country was comparatively open and rolling, and the gang would hardly dare attack forty troopers on the wide prairie. Besides, the nearest water in that direction was twenty miles away; the little rivulet rising in the heart of the hills was ten miles behind them, and

already horses were thirsting and men emptying their canteens. Blankly the major stared up into Barclay's drawn and almost haggard face. "Can you think of anything we ought to do?" he asked, and, in asking, Brooks was a far better soldier than the man who, having exhausted his own resources, thought it *infra dig.* to invite suggestions from his juniors.

"Just one, sir. Sergeant McHugh tells me he once came out here hunting with Captain Mullane, and that they took a light spring wagon right over the range southeast of Crockett's, the way Cramer went. It is a much longer way round, but a more open way. The trail must lie some eight or ten miles off here to the south, or west of south. Could it be that the gang only started from the place of Cramer's ambuscade as though to go to the Pass and then veered around again and covered that trail, and for some reason have been expecting the paymaster that way after all?"

Worn and weary as he was, Brooks staggered to his feet at once, his face going paler still. "By heaven, Barclay, if that's possible, they've had uninterrupted hours in which to deal with Pennywise already! It is possible," he added, with misery in the emphasis of his tone. "I remember having heard of that trail, but never thought it

practicable for an ambulance. Then there is work before us yet. Call Sergeant McHugh," he cried. The word was passed among the wearied groups, where, squatting or lying, the men had thrown themselves upon the ground, and presently, rubbing his red eyes, a stocky little Irish sergeant came trudging up to his commander and silently touched the visor of his worn old cap.

"Can you guide us by the shortest route from here to the trail you spoke of to Captain Barclay?" asked the major.

Mac turned and gazed away southwestward along the line of the San Saba hills.

"I don't think we could miss it, sir, if we followed the foot-hills."

"Then we must try it," said Brooks, decidedly, half turning to the silent officers as he spoke. "Let the horses graze ten minutes more and get all the dew and grass they can, then we'll push for it."

And so, just before five, hungry, weary, and weak,—some of the men at least,—the little squadron clambered into saddle and once more moved away. No need to leave any one to say which way they'd gone; the trail showed all that. Silently they headed for the broad valley of the Bravo, miles away to the invisible west. Once across a little rise in the *falda*, Brooks struck the

slow trot he had learned long years before from the beloved major of his old regiment, and doggedly the column took it up and followed. Not a mile had they gone when the sun came peering up over the heights far in their wake; for a few minutes the dew flashed and sparkled on the turf before it died beneath that fiery breath, and still no man spoke. Sound sleep by night, a cold plunge at dawn, and the hot tin of soldier coffee send the morning tongues of a column *en route* "wagging like sheep's tails," say the troopers, but it takes a forced all-night march, following an all-day ride, followed by a morning start without either cold plunge or hot coffee, to stamp a column with the silence of a Quaker meeting. Let no man think, however, the fight is out of its heart, unless he is suffering for a scrimmage on any terms. Men wake up with a snap at sound of the first shot; dull eyes flash in answer to the bugle challenge, and worn and wearied troopers "take a brace" that means mischief to the foe at the first note that tells of trouble ahead. Just two miles out there came the test to Brooks's men, and there was none so poor as to be found wanting.

Two miles out, and the column woke up at the cry, "Yon comes a courier!" and coming he was, "hell to split," said Sergeant McHugh, from afar off over the rolling prairie to the southwest. Five

minutes brought him within hail,—a corporal from the camp on the Rio San Saba, on foaming horse, who came tugging at both reins, sputtering and plunging, up to the head of column, and blurted out his news. "I thought you was the escort, sir,—the paymaster's escort. They left camp at nine last night, and at two this morning Corporal Murphy got back, shot, and said they were corralled in the hills on the old trail. The captain is coming along with twenty men, and sent me ahead. They must be ten miles from here yet, sir."

"The paymaster, or the captain?" asked Brooks, his heart beating hard, but his face imperturbable.

"Both, sir, I reckon; one one way and the other the other."

Then Brooks signalled over his shoulder. "We've got to gallop, Barclay. It's neck or nothing now." And some horses even then were drooping at the trot.

Six o'clock now. Six miles from the eastward mouth of the Pass, and spurs were plying here and there throughout the column, for many found their horses lagging sorely. Barclay on his splendid blooded bay was far out to the front, the corporal courier with him, for theirs were the only mounts that could stand another forcing of

the pace. Rearward, three or four horses, exhausted, were being gathered up by a burly sergeant, and with their weary riders led slowly along the trail. Six-fifteen:—Barclay and his corporal were but dots along the *falda* now, and moving swiftly. Then at a higher point, in plain view, one dot began circling to the left at speed. Every man knew what that meant, and the signal was answered by another spurt. The sun was telling at last. The dew had dried, but along the turf there was but little dust to rise, and Brooks could keep most of his men together. Far off to the left, all eyes could see now the sign that told that rival rescuers were gaining. The little squad from the San Saba camp came spurring along the beaten trail, betrayed by the cloud of dust that rose above them. Young Connolly, the guidon-bearer of Barclay's troop, unfurled his color and set it flapping in the rising breeze in trooper challenge; and down the column set and haggard faces lighted up with the gleam of soldier joy. It was to be a race,—a race to the rescue. Six-thirty, and over a low ridge went Brooks and Winn, close followed by their orderlies; far away, midway up the opposite slope, stretched a slender, twisting, traversing seam,—the winding trail to Crockett's. The black dots in the lead were now three in number, darting towards two others,

black dots, too, some four miles away and to the right front, right in among the hills. "Keep it up, lads! the quicker to water and rest!" are the major's words now, and spurs set home again, despite equine grunts in protest. Six-forty, and the dots in front are blacker and bigger and popping about, three of them, at least, in lively motion, checking suddenly, then darting to and fro, and the cry bursts from the leader's lips, "By God, they're at it! Now, lads, for all you're worth, come on!" Six-forty-five, and, rounding a projecting spur, a shoulder from the range, Brooks, Winn, and the doctor burst in view of a scene that banishes the last thought of weariness. Barely a mile or so away, a rocky ledge lies beyond and parallel with the trail. Its jagged crest is spitting smoke and fire. Its smoother slopes, towards the east, are dotted in places by the bodies of dead or dying horses, and in places, too, by other, smaller forms, apparently stiff and motionless. Off the trail, as though dragged there by affrighted and agonized animals, lies an overturned ambulance, its six draught-mules outstretched upon the turf about it; so, too, are other quadrupeds, troop-horses evidently. Well back of the ruined wagon, some trusty soul has rallied the remaining troop-horses, while most of their riders, sprawled upon the turf or behind impro-

vised rifle-pits, stick manfully to their duty. "Friday's" ambuscade, in the still hours of the night, has cost the government heavily in horses, men, and mules, but old Pennywise's precious safe is guarded still, and every rush the outlaws make to get it is met by relentless fire. Six-fifty, and, leaving on the field six outlawed forms that will never fight again, the baffled relics of the Fridays are scurrying away into the fastnesses of the range before the labored rush and sputtering fire of Brooks's men, and Galahad, with his corporal comrade, far in the lead, gets the last compliments of the departing gang. Another gallant horse goes down, and Galahad's for the time goes free, his rider falling fainting from exhaustion and loss of blood.

CHAPTER XIII.

Old Frazier's face was sad to see when, two days later, all the harrowing details of that night's work were received at Worth. Hours before, in answer to courier from Crockett's, Dr. Collabone, with steward, attendants, and such ambulances as there were, had been put *en route* for the Springs. Two other troops had been hurried to the field, and Mrs. Blythe, with streaming eyes, was straining to her heart two motherless children, now orphaned by that "one more square fight in Texas." Gallant Ned Lawrence! Far on the way to Cramer's bewildered force they found his body, shot from ambush through and through in two places. Yet, said his weeping orderly, he had clung to the saddle nearly a mile. Oh, the wrath at Department Head-Quarters and along the line of posts and camps against that gang, made up, as so many knew it must be made, mainly of the thugs and deserters offscoured from the army in days when moral character as vouched for was no requisite before enlistment! Among the dead upon the field was found the body of a once trusted sergeant of Lawrence's troop; but

the other outlaws were Mexicans or jailbirds, strange to the soldiers who turned them curiously over. Pennywise, scared half to death and dreadfully shaken by the capsizing of his wagon, was otherwise unscathed; his clerk was shot, his driver sorely wounded; two of the San Saba escort were killed, and others hit. Brooks, with Captain Haines from the San Saba, pushed on until at noon he reached Cramer's people, now reinforced by Fuller and his men and by the shame-stricken Mullane. By nightfall his exhausted horses were drinking their fill from the stream. The two wounded officers, Barclay and Cramer, with half a dozen troopers, were being made as comfortable as possible.

By dawn of the next day Mullane's pleading had overpowered Brooks, whose heart was wrung at the contemplation of such unrequited losses, and, taking Lieutenant Winn and forty troopers with him, the Irish captain, given a chance as he prayed to redeem himself, marched away westward from the cantonment at Crockett's, bent on overtaking the outlaws in the Apache mountains, whither they had gone, burdened by half a dozen wounded, so said the one prisoner, who, unable to bear the torment of jolting along on horseback with an arm bullet-smashed at the elbow, had begged to be left behind. He was a mere boy,

whose elder brother had been for years a fugitive from justice and of late a prominent member of the gang, and it was by the side of that mortally wounded ruffian they found the youngster weeping, more from grief than from pain, only a mile away from the scene of the second ambuscade.

Verily the men who planned those death-traps were masters of their villanous trade! "Concentrate all your first shots on the officers," were the instructions; "get them down, and the men will be helpless as sheep." Cramer, his doctor, and his first sergeant had fallen at the first fire, and that little command was paralyzed. Vigilant bushwackers, schooled for years in Indian fighting, watching the Crockett trail against the coming of other leaders, had easily recognized Lawrence as he rode galloping on at the head of his half-dozen, and the "one more square fight" proved but a one-sided affair after all. Poor Ned knew he had his death-wounds at the instant, yet whipped out his revolver and ordered, "Charge!" and charge they did upon the scattering, cowardly crew that fled before them on their fresh horses until the trooper leader tumbled from his saddle, dead without a groan; and then, at safe distance, his assassins turned and jeered their helpless pursuers. How the veterans of "D" Troop clustered about their old-time captain's lifeless form that

night, and, weary though they were after forty hours of sleepless chase and scout and battle, implored the major to let them start at once upon the outlaws' trail! The same tactics that had halted Cramer's men and murdered Lawrence had been played on the escort from San Saba. Riddling the ambulance at the first volley, yet in the dim moonlight missing the lieutenant commanding, who happened to be riding at the moment on the flank of his column instead of at the head, the sudden volley felled a sergeant, but left the subaltern full of fight, and he rallied his temporarily stampeded troopers not four hundred yards away, and charged back on the Fridays with a splendid dash that drove them helter-skelter to the rocks. Then, dismounting, he had stood them off superbly until rescue came.

Not for another forty-eight hours could old Pennywise be induced to go on to Worth. Though there was reassurance in the fact that the Fridays were scattered over far Western Texas by that time (some never stopping, as it turned out, until safe from pursuit beyond the Bravo), the veteran money-changer's nerve was sorely shaken. He had not half the pluck of his punctured clerk, who, though shot by a Henry rifle bullet through the left arm and across the breast outside the ribs, declared himself fit to take even a hot and feverish

drive and go with the payment. Fuller and his ranchmen stuck manfully to that much desired safe, and announced their intention of protecting the paymaster at all hazards. The wounds of Cramer and Barclay had been most skilfully treated by the young doctor before Collabone reached them; thanks to the perfect habits and vigorous constitution of the latter, there was nothing to prevent his transportation by easy stages back to Worth at the end of the week, and thither he seemed strangely eager to go. Thither they had borne the remains of poor Lawrence, and there with all military honors had they buried all that was mortal of the loved yet luckless comrade. There, her own heart sorely wrung, Mrs. Blythe was doing her utmost to comfort weeping Ada, whose burly little brother was fortunately too young to feel the desolation of their position. But, flat on his back, Barclay had pencilled to the loving-hearted woman a little note that bore her a world of comfort, despite the suffering imposed by a mandate to reveal its contents to no one but her husband; for when a woman has news—good news, great news—to tell, a husband falls far short of the demands of the situation.

Barclay's wound had been dangerous at the time, mainly because the bullet had grazed an artery below the knee and brought on profuse

bleeding that, unnoticed in the excitement of the running fight, sapped him of his strength and left him swooning; but Collabone and his assistant declared it healing perfectly and that not even a limp would remain to betray it. One week from the day of the spirited skirmish in which he had played so prominent and gallant a part, Sir Galahad was lifted into the ambulance and started for Worth at the very moment the general commanding the department was forwarding to Washington his report of the affair, urgently recommending the bestowal of a brevet upon the new captain of "D" Troop and a pension upon the children of his whole-souled, hapless predecessor; but, coupling his recommendations with ill-considered yet natural reference to the injustice with which Captain and Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence had been treated, he succeeded only in entombing the paper in some private pigeon-hole, whence it was resurrected long months after, too late to be of use.

After the manner of the army, the garrison at Worth had ceased all outward sign of mourning by the time Barclay reached the post, and almost everybody was ready to devote himself or herself to the amelioration of his condition. Mrs. Frazier, with a motherly eye to business, had lost no time in urging upon her liege the pro-

priety—indeed, the imperative necessity—of his riding out to meet the wounded officer and moving him at once under the shelter of their roof. Amanda could and should give up her room (she was only too glad to), and the girls could sleep together; then the mother and daughters would have sole charge of the nursing of this most eligible young man. What might not be accomplished by such a matron and such dear girls under such exceptional circumstances? Indeed, Frazier was given to understand that he must do it, for if Barclay was allowed to return to his own quarters right next door to the Winns' —and Mr. Winn away—who could say what couldn't be said?—what wouldn't be said? "Everybody knew that Laura Winn had been doing her best," said Mrs. Frazier, "to reset her nets and lure her whilom lover within the meshes," and this would give her opportunities immeasurable. Frazier had a sleepless night of it. He could not combat his wife's theories, though he would not admit the truth of all she asserted. "But," said he, "everybody will see through the scheme at a glance."

"I don't care if they do. I don't care what they say," said his energetic and strategic spouse. "The end justifies the means. Something must be done for the girls you've buried out here in

this wilderness. As for Laura Winn, better a sneer at my precautions than a scandal for lack of them."

But Frazier remonstrated: "Barclay isn't the man to get mixed up in a scandal," said he.

"But Laura Winn wouldn't flinch at it," said she, "and it's the way the woman acts—not the man—that sets people talking;" wherein was Mrs. Frazier schooled beyond the sphere in which she moved. At her bidding, Frazier sent for young Brayton, who had marched back with the detachment not sent in chase, told him of Mrs. Frazier's benevolent plans for his captain's comfort, and suggested that such of Barclay's things as he might need be sent over beforehand,—"so as to have everything ready, you know."

The youngster looked embarrassed, said he would attend to it, but immediately sought Major Brooks, who was doing a good deal of resting at the time. "What am I to say to Colonel Frazier, sir?" he asked. "The colonel tells me Mrs. Frazier has a room all ready for Captain Barclay and wishes me to send over a lot of things, and I have a message from the captain saying he will probably arrive day after to-morrow and to have his room ready; and, he adds, in case any one plans to put him elsewhere, to decline in his name."

"Oh, wise young judge!" growled Brooks to

himself. Every day was adding to his respect for Galahad.

"I can't decline the commanding officer's invitation, can I, sir?" asked Brayton, in conclusion.

"No, you can't with safety," said the major, "but I'll speak to Collabone—— No," he added, abruptly, as he reflected that Mrs. Frazier might eventually hear of it, Collabone being a man who knew no guile and told everybody anything he knew. "No. You tell Collabone what the captain wishes, and let him fix it." And so between the three it was arranged, through the couriers at that time going back and forth every day, that Barclay should be notified of the honor in store for him. And notified he was, and gravely passed the letter over to Æsculapius Junior.

"Help me out of this, doctor, in some way," he said. "I wish to be nobody's guest." And so, when old Frazier did actually mount a horse and, with Amanda in a stylish habit beaming at his side, did actually ride forth—the first time he'd been in saddle in a year—and meet Barclay's ambulance full a thousand yards out from the post, and bade him thrice welcome to the room they had prepared for him, Barclay beamed back his thanks and appreciations, and bade the colonel believe he would never forget his kindness and Mrs. Frazier's, but that he had every possible com-

fort awaiting him at his own quarters, and could never consent to incommoding Mrs. Frazier or the young ladies. Indeed, the doctor had made other and very different plans for him,—as indeed the doctor had. And Frazier rode back vaguely relieved, yet crestfallen. He knew Barclay and the doctor were right. He knew he himself shrank from such throwing of his daughters at a fellow's head; and then he quailed at the thought of Mrs. Frazier's upbraidings, for she, honest woman, felt it a mother's duty to provide for her precious lambs, the more so because their father was so culpably indifferent, if not shamefully negligent.

A balked and angered woman was Mrs. Frazier at the captain's politely veiled refusal to come and be nursed and captured under her roof. Tartaric acid tinged the smiles of her innocent children the next few days, and if ever there was a time when it behooved Laura Winn to be on her guard and behave with the utmost reserve as regarded her next-door neighbor, it was here and now. She could have read the danger signal in the Fraziers' greeting at parade that very evening, as, most becomingly attired, she strolled languidly down the line at the side of Æsculapius Junior, who, after seeing his patient comfortably stowed in bed, came forth to find her on the piazza, full of sym-

pathetic interest and eager to know what she could do or make or have made in the way of appetizing dainties for the sufferer. Nor did she let him free until he found refuge in the midst of the deeply interested group in front of the colonel's quarters.

This was Tuesday evening, and only Brooks, Blythe, and Brayton were permitted to intrude upon the invalid after the long hours' trundle over the prairie roads. On the morrow the paymaster was to take his ambulance, escort, and emptied safe on the back track to Crockett's, and Barclay was to be allowed to see Mrs. Blythe; but, for the night, rest and quiet were enjoined. In answer to his queries, he was told that the latest news reported Mullane, Winn, and Bralligan scouring the Apache range, while Captain Haight, with forty men, was patrolling towards the Bravo. The post was flush with money. Fuller's bar was doing a rousing business, and Lieutenant Trott, guarding the stores turned over by Winn, was wondering when and in what shape the money value of the stores not turned over was to be paid to him, for the time was past, Winn was far, far away, no package of money had come for him, and Mrs. Winn calmly said it was no affair of hers and she had no knowledge when or by what hand it would be forthcoming. It was

conceded at Worth that, in view of the danger in which her husband stood, both afield and at home, more anxiety and less adornment would better have become the lady, as she outshone all other women present when the line of infantry officers broke ranks at dismissal of parade.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WEEK rolled by, a week little Jim Lawrence and other small boys long remembered for the good things they had to eat and drink; and now Galahad was sitting up again at his quarters, doing very well, said both doctors, so well that he could be out on the shaded piazza in a reclining chair, said Brayton,—but wouldn't, said Blythe,—and for good reasons, said the Fraziers feminine, "because then there'd be no dodging Laura Winn, if, indeed, he has succeeded thus far." True, he had not ventured outside his doors, and no one had seen her venture within them. True, Mrs. Frazier, Mrs. Blythe, and other motherly women had been to visit him,—Mrs. Frazier frequently,—and Mrs. Winn had been most particular in her daily inquiries,—"most persistent," said the Frazier girls. Those were days in which milk was a luxury in far-away Texas, but the delicate custards, whips, creams, and what the colonel's Hibernian orderly described as "floating Irelands," which that messenger bore with Mrs. Frazier's love, or Miss Frazier's compliments, or Miss 'Manda Frazier's regards and hopes that the

captain was better this morning, could be numbered only by the passing days. What Mrs. Frazier was prepared to see or hear of was similar attention on the part of Mrs. Winn; but Mrs. Winn's attentions took a form more difficult to see, and, even in a frontier, old-time garrison, to hear of.

What Mrs. Frazier was not prepared to see was Mrs. Blythe in frequent confidential chat with the officer whom the colonel's wife chose to consider her own invalid. She had always fancied Mrs. Blythe before, but now she met her with that indescribable tone suggestive of unmerited yet meekly, womanfully borne injury, which is so superior to either explanation or resentment. Mrs. Winn was frequently on her piazza chatting with Mr. Brayton or Dr. "Funnybone," as the wits of the post had designated Collabone's right bower, "who has more brains in one head," said Collabone, "than the mess has in ten;" but she greeted Mrs. Frazier with an austere and distant dignity even more pronounced than Mrs. Frazier's manner to Mrs. Blythe, which plainly showed that Laura had not "been raised in the army for nothing," and that she had a will and temper and pluck that would brook no airs and tolerate no aspersions on Mrs. Frazier's part. Aspersions there had been, for her friend Mrs. Faulkner had

not failed in that sisterly duty which so many women so reluctantly yet faithfully perform, and everything Mrs. and the Misses Frazier had even hinted, and some things they even hadn't, were duly conveyed to Laura's ears. She was angered at the Fraziers for daring to say such things, at Mrs. Faulkner for daring to repeat them, and at Barclay for daring to keep her beyond the possibility of their being true. Never before had she known what it was to strive for a look or word of admiration and to meet utter indifference. Yet those blue eyes of Barclay's had once fairly burned with passionate delight in her girlish beauty, and his words had trembled with their weight of love for her. No other woman, she believed, had yet come into his life and banished all memory of her; and, now that her beauty was but the riper for her years, she rebelled in her soul against the whisper that it could no longer move him.

Wedded though she was to Harry Winn, loving him after the fashion of her shallow nature so long as there was no man at the post from whom she sought to exact homage, she had time and again within the year felt towards her husband a sense of injury. What business had he had to woo her if he was so poor? What right had he to subject her to the annoyance of dunning let-

ters, of suggestive inquiries on the part of her neighbors? Why should she submit to parsimonious skimping and cheese-paring, to living with only one servant when several other women had two, to all the little shifts and meannesses poor Harry had declared to be necessary? It was his business to provide for her needs. Her father had always supported her in style; why couldn't Harry do the same? True, she knew when she married him he had nothing but his pay. He told her everything, but she had never taken thought for the morrow, though she had taken perhaps too much thought of what she should wear or eat or drink. Laura loved the good things of this life, and had been freely indulged throughout her petted girlhood; and now, in the days when every woman seemed turning against her, purse, cellar, and larder were empty and her husband gone on a stupid foray to the mountains. None could say when he would return, or what new sorrow would meet him then. Other men managed to earn money or make money somehow outside their pay. Why should she, whose tastes, she said, were so much more refined, be mated with one who could only spend?

There is a time when many a homely face becomes radiant with a beauty too deep for sallow skin or heavy features to hide, and when a really

winsome face becomes well-nigh angelic; but, even as Laura Winn bent over her sleeping child or nestled the unconscious little one in her bosom, the sullen fire of discontent, thwarted ambition, and wounded self-love smouldered in her deep, slumberous eyes. There were hours now when Baby Winn was left to the scant care of the household nurse, while the mother took the air upon the piazza during the day or flitted about from parlor to parlor along the row at night. She was restless, nervous, as all could see. She frequently assailed Brayton with queries for news, always decorously asking first if couriers had come or were expected from the command afield, yet speedily coming back to the real object of her constant thoughts, the now much honored officer, her next-door neighbor. For three days after he was pronounced able to sit up she did not succeed in seeing him at all, though so many other and, it should be explained, much older women did; but that did not abate one whit her determination that he should speedily see her.

Just what her object was she herself could not have told. It was an instinct, an impulse, a whim, perhaps; but he who had been her lover and was rejected had dared to gaze into her face with eyes serene and untroubled, had met her but half-veiled references to old days with polite but posi-

tive indifference. She had nothing to ask of him, she told herself; she meant no disloyalty to Harry, no wrong of any kind. Not a bit of it! She had treated Barclay very badly. She had done him a wrong that was much greater in her own estimation than it was in that of any one of her neighbors, among whom the women, at least, considered the loss of his inamorata a blessing in disguise; but Laura fully believed that Barclay's heart must have been crushed in the depth of his woe, and that it was now her duty to make friends again,—perhaps in some way to console him; not, of course, in any way to which Harry could object, not, of course, in any way to which the post ought to object, but—well, even to herself, as has been said, she could not entirely and satisfactorily explain her motives; it was impossible, therefore, that she could hope to do so to anybody else; and yet she had dared to write to him. It was only a little note, and yet, with all its inconsistencies, it said so much:

"Dear Captain Barclay,—I cannot tell you my distress at hearing of your again being severely wounded, especially at a time when I had hoped to have you meet and better know my husband, but now in his distressing absence I, who more than any woman at this post am anxious to

show my sympathy and sorrow, am practically helpless. Do tell me if there is anything I can do,—though I am sure I can't see what is left for me, with no cook or kitchen, and Mrs. Frazier and the Misses Frazier sending such loads of things. I really envy them and Mrs. Blythe the privilege of their years in going to see you personally, for am I not at least

"Your oldest friend, "L. W."

This ingenuous note was sent by Hannibal at an hour when the captain was alone, and when, had he been disposed, he might have hobbled to the door and answered in person; but hobble he did not, nor did he answer until after long thought. He received the little missive with surprise, read it without a tremor of hand or lip, but with something of shame and pity that overspread his face like a cloud. Was he only just beginning to know her, after all?

"Pray do not give my scratch a thought," he answered, in writing, late that afternoon, "and believe, my dear Mrs. Winn, that I have every comfort that one can possibly desire. Every one is most kind. I expect to be out with my men in a week, and shall be delighted to take the field and send Mr. Winn back to you forthwith.

"Most sincerely."

And that was how, with polite but positive indifference, he had treated her reference to old times and old friends. Shallow as she was, Laura Winn was deep enough to see that he meant to hold himself far aloof from her. He could hardly have told her more plainly he would have none of her. He had even dared to say it would be a pleasure to go, that he might send her husband back to her arms. And this was the man she once thought she loved, the man who, she believed, adored her and would never outlive the passion of his sorrow at losing her!

Even now the foolish heart of the woman might have accepted its lesson; but it was time for friends again to come, and, as Laura expressed it, "pry and prod and preach," and that brought on a climax.

Mrs. Faulkner had dropped in and dropped out again, and Laura, who seemed forever going to the porch these days, followed and called her back.

"One thing you said I don't understand," she began, and Mrs. Faulkner's pretty face showed plainly there had been something of a storm.

"I said this, Laura," her friend responded, permitting her to go no further, but turning at the step and looking up into her indignant eyes. "You do yourself injury by showing such con-

cern about Captain Barclay. Everybody says so, and it's all wasted as far as he's concerned. He never notices your messages in any way."

It was galling to feel herself censured or criticised, but Mrs. Winn was becoming used to that. It was worse than galling to be told that her whilom lover now turned from her almost with contempt. She could bear it that they should say that Galahad Barclay was again circling within danger of her fascinations and would speedily find himself powerless to resist. She could not bear it that they should declare him dead to her. The anger ablaze in her eyes and flushing her cheeks was something even Mrs. Faulkner had never seen before. It was as though she had roused some almost tigerish trait. For a moment Laura stood glaring at her visitor, one hand nervously clutching at the balcony rail, the other at the snugly buttoned bodice of her dark gown. At that instant the door of Barclay's quarters opened and the sound of glad voices preceded but a second or two the appearance of feminine drapery at the threshold. Mrs. Brooks came backing into view, chatting volubly with some one still invisible. Mrs. Frazier came sidling after, and then as they reached the open air the deep tones of their invalid host were heard mingling with the lighter, shriller, if not exactly

silvery accents of his visitors. One glance they threw towards the young matron at the opposite end of the piazza, and then it seemed as though Mrs. Frazier promptly precipitated herself into the doorway again, as though to block it against Barclay's possible egress. "Determined not to let him see me, nor me him," were the unspoken words that flashed through Laura's thoughts. Some devil of mischief seemed to whisper in her ear, for when Mrs. Faulkner turned again, there stood her hostess holding forth for her inspection a little note addressed to Mrs. H. H. Winn in a hand Mrs. Faulkner recognized at once as that of Barclay. With an icy sneer the irate lady spoke:

"You think he doesn't write. This came only an hour ago."

Not five minutes later Mrs. Frazier turned to Mrs. Faulkner and asked, "What was Laura Winn showing you?—a letter?"

Mrs. Blythe was passing at the moment, Ada Lawrence, a tall, pallid slip of a girl, in her first black dress, walking sadly at her side. Mrs. Faulkner nodded assent to the question, but glanced significantly at the passers-by, on their way seemingly to the house the elders had just left. Mrs. Blythe bowed courteously and smiled, but the smile was one of those half-hearted at-

tempts that seemed to wither instantly at Mrs. Frazier's solemn and distant salutation.

"Now what's that woman taking Ada Lawrence there for?" was Mrs. Frazier's query the instant the two were out of earshot, and for the moment she forgot the letter and the significant glance in Mrs. Faulkner's eyes. But Mrs. Brooks had not, and no sooner had the door of Barclay's quarters opened and swallowed up the new callers than the major's wife turned back to it.

"You don't mean a letter from—*him?*" she asked, with a nod of the head at Barclay's quarters.

"I didn't mean to say anything about it," said Mrs. Faulkner, with proper hesitation, "but you seem to know as much as I do, and she made no secret of it whatever. Indeed, I don't know that there's anything in it that anybody mightn't see."

"I think she has no business whatever receiving letters now that her husband's away—nor any other time, for that matter," said Mrs. Frazier, hotly; "and I mean to tell her so; and I'm astonished at him."

"For heaven's sake don't tell her I let it out!" exclaimed Mrs. Faulkner. "You've just got to say you saw it away from his door."

"Well, I think the sooner Mr. Harry Winn gets back the better it will be for this garrison,

and I'll say so to Colonel Frazier this very night," exclaimed the colonel's wife, bristling with proper indignation. "And he'll come back, if we have to send couriers to order him."

But no courier was needed to summon Lieutenant Winn. Two days later, fast as jaded horse could carry him, followed by a single orderly, he was coming, full of hope and pluck and enthusiasm, the bearer of tidings that meant so much to him, that might be of such weight in the removal of some portion, at least, of the serious stoppages against his pay. Away out in the Apache mountains, where the remnants of the Friday gang seemed to have scattered into little squads of two or three, one party had been trailed and chased to its hole, a wild nook in the rocks, and there in brief, bloody fight two more of the gang bit the dust in reaching that height of outlaw ambition, "dying with their boots on." Others were wounded and captured, and still another, neither wounded nor combatant, but a trembling skulker, was dragged out from a cleft in among the boulders and kicked into the presence of the commanding officer by a burly Irishman who would have lost the bliss of a dozen pay-day sprees rather than that one achievement, for the skulking captive was Marsden, and Marsden was English.

A more abject, pitiable, helpless wretch even Texan troopers had never seen. Imploring his captors to protect him against the illimitable possibilities of lynch law,—for there were veteran soldiers present to whose thinking drum-head court-martial and summary execution were all too good for Marsden,—the ex-sergeant told the story of his stealings, and the names of his accomplices, but declared that all his ill-gotten gains were gone. Every cent he had at the time of his flight was taken from him, he protested, by the gang of desperadoes among whom he had found refuge.

"He's lyin', sorr," declared Sergeant Shaughnessy at this juncture. "He's hidin' the hoith av it somewheres, an' there's nothin' like the noose av a lariat to frishen his mimory." But old Mullane ordered silence.

"Go you back to Worth fast as you can," said he to Winn. "Write the report for me to sign before you start. Tell the colonel where what is left of the stolen property can be found, and we'll bring Marsden along with us. The quicker you get there the more you can save."

Worth was one hundred and fifty miles away on a bee-line, and Winn had to twist and turn, but he rode with buoyant heart. By prompt measures much of his misfortune might be wiped

out. Then, with the proffered loan with which to settle his accounts and pay off certain pressing creditors, he could start afresh, his head at last above the waters that had weighed him down. He would lead a simple, inexpensive life, and Laura would have to help him. He could set aside one-fourth, or even, perhaps, one-third, of his pay to send each month to the bank at San Antonio. It would be hard, but at least he would be honest and manful, and Laura would have to try to dress and live inexpensively. She used to say she would rather share exile and poverty with him than a palace with any other man, but that seemed a bit like hyperbole in the light of her subsequent career. Long before this, he said, the bank would have sent the money to Worth. It was doubtless now awaiting him in Fuller's safe, or possibly Trott's. How blessed a thing it was that the cashier should have been an old and warm friend of his father,—that he should have written proffering aid for old times' sake to the son of the soldier he had known and been aided by and had learned to love in bygone days! It was odd that Mr. Cashier Bolton had not made himself known to him, Harry Winn, when he and his lovely bride were in San Antonio, but all the more was the offer appreciated. It was odd that he should couple with the offer a condition

that Winn should give his word not to tell the name of his father's friend and his own benefactor, and further to agree neither to drink any intoxicant nor bet a cent on any game of chance until the money was repaid. He was not given to drinking, but he had heard of a fondness on his father's part for cards, and had felt the fascination himself. All right: he would promise gladly.

They got fresh horses at a midway camp where a small detachment guarded the Cougar Springs, rested during the hot hours of the first day after a long night ride, then set forth, chasing their long shadows in the late afternoon, and, riding on through the night, hove in sight of the twinkling lights in the company kitchens at Worth just as the dawn was spreading over the eastward prairie. At the guard-house, aroused by the sentry's warning, a sergeant tumbled off his bench and ran sleepily out to meet them. It was a man whom Winn had frequently seen hovering about his quarters in attendance upon their maid-of-all-work.

"All well at home, Quigley?" he queried, hopefully.

"All well, sir; leastwise Mrs. Winn and the baby is, so Miss Purdy said yesterday evenin'. Mrs. Blythe with her children and Colonel Law-

rence's have gone to San Antonio. They're all goin' home together. Any luck, sir?"

"I should say so! Hit 'em hard twice, and caught Marsden alive."

"Great—— Beg pardon, lieutenant, but that's the best news yet!" The soldier's eyes danced and pleaded for more, but Winn was eager to reach home, to tiptoe up to Laura's room, to kneel by the bedside and fold her, waking, in his strong, yearning arms, to bend and kiss his baby's sleeping face. He spurred on across the parade. The long, low line of officers' quarters lay black and unrelieved against the reddening sky. Only in one or two were faint night-lights burning, one down near the southern end, the room of the officer of the day, another in his own. The slats of the blinds, half turned, revealed the glimmer of a lamp within. Probably baby was awake and demanding entertainment, and there could be no surprising Laura as he had planned. Still, he guided his horse so as to avoid pebbles or anything that would click against the shod hoofs. The home-coming would be the sweeter for its being unheralded.

"Never mind the saddle-bags now," he murmured to his orderly. "Take the horses to stables, and bring the traps over by and by." Then he tiptoed around to the back of the house.

The front door, he knew, would be locked; so would that opening on the little gallery in rear; but there was the window of his den; he could easily raise it from outside and let himself in without any one's being the wiser. A glance at his watch showed him that in ten minutes the morning gun would fire and the post wake up to the shrill reveille of the infantry fifes and drums. Even though Laura should be awake and up with her baby, the surprise might be attempted. The back porch was lighted up with the glow from the east. The back door of the Barclay-Brayton establishment was ajar, and some one was moving about in the kitchen,—Hannibal, probably, getting coffee for his master in time for morning stables. Just to try it, Winn tiptoed up the low steps to the rear door, and there it stood, not wide open, but just ajar. "Miss Purdy" had mended her ways, then, and was rising betimes, he said. Softly entering, he passed through the little kitchen into the dark dining-room beyond, felt his way through into his deserted den to the left, —the blinds were tightly closed,—thence to the narrow hall, and up the carpeted, creaking stairs. The door of the back room at the east, the nursery, was right at the landing. The light of the dawn was strong enough to reveal dimly objects within. That door, too, was wide open, and there

by the bedside was the cradle of his baby, and the little one placidly asleep. There in her bed, innocent of the possibility of masculine observation, her ears closed, her mouth wide open in the stupor of sleep, lay the domestic combination of nurse and maid-of-all-work. He tiptoed past the door and softly approached that of the front, the westward room,—his and Laura's. It, too, was partly open. A lamp burned dimly on the bureau. The broad, white bed, with its tumbled pillows and tossed-back coverlet, was empty, as he found the room to be. Laura, then, and not the maid, was the early riser. Softly he searched about the upper floor. She had heard him, after all, and was hiding somewhere to tease him. No; there on the back of her rocking-chair hung the pink, beribboned wrapper that was so becoming to her, and on another the dainty, lace-trimmed night-robe. She must be up and dressed,—his languid, lazy Laura, who rarely rose before nine o'clock, as a rule, and now it was only five. A strange throbbing began at his heart. Quickly he turned and scurried down the stairs, struck a match in the parlor, another in the dining-room. Both were empty. The den and its closets were explored. No one there.

Out he went through the kitchen to the eastward porch again. The light was stronger. Over

the level *mesa* to the edge of the bluff, not fifty yards away, his eager eyes swept in search of the truant form. There stood at the very brow of the projecting point at the northeast side a little, latticed summer-house where sentimental couples sometimes sat and looked over the shallow valley of moonlight nights; and there, close beside it, switching the skirt of her stylish riding-habit with her whip, stood Laura Winn. Just as she turned and glanced impatiently over her shoulder, out from the adjoining door came a soldierly form in riding-dress. For an instant three forms seemed to stand stock-still; then came the shock and roar of the reveille gun, and before the echoes rolled away Lieutenant Winn, striding up to Barclay with fury in his eyes, struck the captain full in the face and sent him crashing over a kitchen chair.

CHAPTER XV.

Ten miles out to the northwest the stream that curved and twisted around the low *mesa* of Fort Worth burst its way through a ridge in the foothills, and, brawling and dashing at its rocky banks, rolled out over the lowlands, foaming at the mouth with the violence of its own struggles. Far in the heart of the hills it had its source in several clear, cold springs, while the deep hoarded snows of the harsh winters fed and swelled it in the springtide until it reached the proportions of a short-lived torrent. Huge heaps of uprooted trees and tangled brushwood it deposited along its shores as far down even as the fort, but nothing was carried below the sutler's. "Ahl's fish that comes to Fuller's net," said Sergeant McHugh, "an' sorra a sliver av a sardine iver got away from it." Once in a while, after unusual flood, the flotsam and jetsam of the creek would be diversified with wagon-bodies, ranch roofs, camp equipage, and the like, for "the Range," as this odd upheaval was locally termed, was a famous place for prospectors.

A beautiful stream was the Blanca within its

mountain gates, but an ashen pallor overspread it after its fight for freedom. It was never the same stream after it got away. It danced and sparkled past pretty nooks and shaded ravines among the hills, but issued from the gateway, like the far-famed Stinking River of the Bannocks and Shoshones of Northwestern Wyoming, a metamorphosed stream. It had a bad reputation. It was solely responsible for the fact that Worth had been located away out here in the bald, bleak, open prairie country, instead of among those bold and beautiful heights to the northwest. "The very spot for a military post!" said the officers of the earlier scouting parties, as they camped within the gates in the midst of a lonely glade. "Lovely," said the Texan guides, in reply, "so long as you don't mind being drowned out every spring." It seems that snows would melt of a sudden, tremendous thunderstorms burst among the crags, and flood and deluge the valleys, for the Blanca could not with sufficient swiftness discharge its swollen torrents through that narrow gorge. Beautiful it lay, ordinarily, as a summer sea, and the bridle-path that wound through the pass was a favorite route for picnic-parties from Worth. But storm-clouds would rise and turn summer seas to raging water-demons, and then the flood that tore through the

gates would sweep all before it, like the unloosed waters of the Conemaugh that awful May of '89.

From Worth to the White Gate the prairie road wound hard and firm, and before the late excitement several picnic-, riding-, and driving-parties had paid their spring-time visits. It was quite the thing, too, for such maids and matrons as were good horsewomen to ride thither in the lengthening afternoons. Mrs. Frazier had consulted Collabone as to the earliest date on which Barclay could stand a long drive, as she wished to give a little *fête* in his honor, and had planned a picnic to Barrier Rock, a romantic spot just within the gorge. Collabone had referred her to his assistant, and that younger officer consulted his patient before committing himself to reply.

"I don't care to ride in an ambulance, doctor, but I do long to get in saddle. There's no strain on that leg below the knee. Can't you let me mount from my back porch here and amble around these fine mornings before people are up?" And "Funnybone" assented. He and Barclay rode out together, very cautiously, next morning at reveille, and, finding his patient benefited by the gentle exercise on such a perfect mount as either of those Kentucky bays, the doctor said, "Go again; only ride slowly, and mount and dismount only at the back porch, where you have

only to lower yourself into saddle. Be sure to avoid any shock or jar, then you're all right."

Hannibal and Mrs. Winn's domestic were the only persons besides Barclay's orderly to see the start, but had the domestic herself been alone it would have been sufficient to insure transmission of the news. First she told her mistress. Later she learned from Hannibal that the captain was going out to stables next morning the same way, and had ordered coffee to be ready at reveille. This, too, was conveyed to Laura, and that evening she sent for the veteran stable sergeant of the troop to which her husband was temporarily attached, and asked him if Robin Hood, a pretty little chestnut she used to ride, was still in the stable. He was, and would Mrs. Winn be pleased to ride? The sergeant would be glad to see the lady in saddle again. Her handsome side-saddle was, with her bridle, always kept in perfect order, but for several months Mrs. Winn had taken no exercise that way.

"I'm going to ride at reveille, sergeant," she confided to the faithful soldier. "It's so long since I mounted, I wish to try once or twice when people can't see me." And Sergeant Burns had promised that as soon as the sentry would release him after gun-fire Robin Hood should be on hand. He'd be proud to come with him himself.

True to his word, Burns was up at four-fifteen; Robin was groomed and fed and watered and saddled in style, and ready to start the moment the sentry was relieved by the morning gun-fire from the imposition of the order to "allow no horse to be taken out between taps and reveille, except in the presence of a commissioned officer or the sergeant of the guard." The sight that met the sergeant's eyes as he cantered around back of the row of officers' quarters, leading Robin by the rein, was one he never forgot.

With pallid face, down which the blood was streaming from a cut at the temple, Captain Barclay was seated on the steps, striving to bind a handkerchief about his lower leg. Old Hannibal, forgetful of the dignity of the Old Dominion, was actually running down the back road, in haste, it seems, to summon the doctor. On the porch, amid some overturned chairs, two athletic, sinewy young men were grappling, one of them, Lieutenant Brayton, almost lifting and carrying the other, Lieutenant Winn, towards his own doorway, both ashen gray as to their faces, both fearfully excited, both struggling hard, both with panting breath striving to speak with exaggerated calm.

On this scene, wringing her hands, sobbing with fright and misery, flitting first to Barclay's

side, then back towards her straining husband, saying wild and incoherent things to both, was Laura Winn. Burns had the frontiersman's contempt for a chimney-pot hat, and never seemed one so incongruous as this,—her riding head-gear which in the midst of her wailings Mrs. Winn clasped to her heaving breast. To make matters more complicated, the neighborhood was waking up, domestics and "strikers" were gazing from back porches farther down the row, and Blythe's big hounds had taken to barking furiously, until that bulky and bewildered soldier himself came forth, damned them into their kennel, then hastened in consternation to the aid of Barclay. By this time, too, Winn had succeeded in making his wife hear him, and was ordering her within-doors; but like some daft creature she hovered, moaning and wringing her hands and staring at Barclay, whose eyes were now beginning to close, and whose form was slowly swaying.

"In God's name, man, what's happened?" demanded Blythe, as he seized and steadied the toppling form. "Why, you're bleeding like an ox. Your boot is running over. Drop those horses, Burns, and run for the doctor, lively," he urged. Needing no further authority, the sergeant turned his charges loose and scurried after Hannibal.

"Help me carry Barclay in-doors," was the next word. With one warning order to Winn to keep away, young Brayton broke loose from him and ran to assist. As though half stupefied, Winn heavily moved a pace or two, then sank upon a bench and stared. His wife stood gazing in horror at the trail of blood that followed the three men into the hall, then faltered over to where the young soldier sat, moaning, "Oh, Harry! Oh, Harry!" Reaching his side, she laid her hand upon his shoulder and bade him look at her,—speak to her. He rose slowly to his feet, his face averted, shook himself free, and, with a shudder, but never uttering a word in reply, passed into his dark doorway. The nurse-girl, wide-eyed, met him at the threshold. "Go to your mistress," he said, hoarsely. He stumbled on through the house, unslung the revolver belted to his waist, and laid it on the hall table; reconsidered; buckled it firmly on, and, pulling his hat down over his eyes, drew back the door-bolt and let himself out upon the front piazza. Crossing the parade, he saw the red sash of the officer of the day. De Lancy was dragging sleepily back from his reveille visit to the guard, but the sight of Winn aroused him, and he quickened his pace and came striding to him.

"Hullo, lad," he hailed, full twenty paces

away, "what luck? Got Marsden, the sergeant tells me.—Why—— Good God! what's happened?"

"Nothing," said Winn, "except, perhaps, I've killed Barclay. Take me to the colonel."

"You're daft, man!" said De Lancy, instantly, while an awful fear almost checked the beating of his heart. Then, seizing Winn by the arm, "What d'ye mean?" he asked.

"Go and see," said Winn, stupidly, as he buried his face in his arms a moment, then stretched them out full length, and, tossing his head back, shut his eyes as though to blot out a hateful sight. "Go," he continued; "then come and take me to the colonel."

And De Lancy started on the run and collided with Brayton at the door.

"For God's sake, go and hurry up 'Funnybone,'" moaned the youngster. "Here's Barclay bleeding to death."

De Lancy ran his best: guardsmen across the parade stopped and stared, men in shirt-sleeves rushed out on the barrack stoops and stood and gazed, and a corporal, with rifle trailed, came running over to see what was amiss, just as the junior doctor, in cap and overcoat, trousers and slippers, came bolting out of his hallway and flying up the path. In front of De Lancy's one

slipper went hurtling back through midair, but the doctor rushed on in stocking-foot. The corporal picked up the shoe and followed. No one seemed to look for the moment at Winn, who turned slowly back to the pathway and like a blind man seemed groping his way towards Frazier's. The officer of the day passed him by on the run, following at the doctor's heels, with never another look at him. Men seemed to think only of Barclay. Was it credible that an officer and a gentleman, as Winn had been regarded, could purposely have dealt that honored soldier a mortal blow, unless—unless—but who could find words to frame the thought? Once within Brayton's hallway, De Lancy turned and slammed shut the door, for others were coming on the run from far across the parade. Over at the guard-house the men had started for their breakfast, but hung there, clustered about the sentry-post, gazing over the criss-cross plat of the parade, and muttering their conjectures as to the cause of the trouble. The sight of Lieutenant Winn wandering on down the row, turning from time to time, halting as though uncertain what he ought to do, while every other officer was running to the other end of the row, was something they could not understand.

Then Mrs. Winn, in riding-habit, came sud-

denly forth upon her piazza, and, gazing wildly up and down, caught sight of her husband, now some fifty paces away along the gravel walk. Stretching forth her arms to him, she began to call aloud, "Harry! Harry! please come back!" He never turned. She ran down the steps and out to the gate and called him, louder, louder, so that they could hear the voice all over the garrison in the sweet, still morning air; but on he went, doggedly now, faster and faster. She gathered up her clinging skirts in one hand, and, pleading still, followed after. Not until he had mounted the steps at the colonel's did the young officer turn again; then with uplifted hand and arm he stood warning her back. Something in the attitude, something in the stern, quivering white face, seemed at last to bring to her the realization of the force of his unspoken denunciation.

"Harry! Harry!" she cried. "Oh, come and let me tell you. You don't understand! I meant no wrong! I was only going for a ride,—not with him,—not with him, Harry!" And so, pleading, weeping, she followed almost to the colonel's gate before the door was opened from within and Winn was swallowed up in the darkness of the hall.

By this time some inkling of the trouble had been borne to Collabone, ever an early riser. As

he came hastily forth from his quarters, the first thing he saw was the drooping form of Mrs. Winn, weeping at the colonel's gate. Seizing her arm with scant ceremony, he whirled her about and bore her homeward, she sobbing out her story as they sped along, he listening with clouded, anxious face.

"Go back to your room, Mrs. Winn," he said, so solemnly and warningly she could not but heed. "Go to your baby. I'll go first next door, then I'll find your husband." She shrank within the hallway, and threw herself, weeping miserably, upon the sofa in the pretty parlor,—the parlor where she had so fascinated Hodge. There the sound of her baby's wailing reached her in an interval of her own, and she called to the nurse to do something to comfort that child. There was no answer. "Miss Purdy," with clattering tongue and eager eyes and ears and half a dozen sympathizing neighbors, was out in rear of the house, deaf to demands of either mother or child; there Collabone found her, and sent her scurrying within before the fury of his wrath.

"Now, this will not do, Mrs. Winn," he said, as, following, he lifted the moaning woman from the sofa. "You must go to your room,—to your child, as I told you. Captain Barclay will soon be all right. He has lost much blood, but the hemor-

rhage is checked. Now I will go for Mr. Winn. It's a bad business, but don't make it worse by any more—nonsense." With that he not too gently pushed her up the first few stairs, then turned abruptly and hastened away to Frazier's.

In the hall he found that gray-haired, gray-faced veteran listening stupidly to Winn.

"I don't understand, sir," he was saying. "You struck him—with what?"

"I don't know," said Winn. "They say I've killed him. I have come to surrender myself." His eyes were as dull and leaden as his heart.

"It's not so bad," burst in the doctor. "Barclay fell or was knocked over a chair, and the jar reopened his wound. He fainted from loss of blood, but it's checked now."

"But—how?—why?" the colonel was stammering. Over the balustrade aloft popped one head night-capped, and two with touseled hair, and blanched faces were framed in all three, and gasping words were heard, and whisperings as of awe-stricken, news-craving souls. "Where did this occur, and when did you return, sir?"

"On the back porch of my—of our quarters, colonel,—when I got back, just before gun-fire."

"And what possible excuse or explanation have you, sir? What could warrant such—such conduct?" demanded Frazier, as though at a loss for

suitable words. Yet, even as he asked, his wife's predictions reasserted themselves, and he glanced uneasily aloft.

"Come into the parlor, colonel," implored Collabone. "Say no more here. Let me explain. It's all a wretched mistake." And, half pushing, half pulling, but all impelling, the doctor succeeded in hustling the post commander and the inert, unresisting subaltern within the parlor. Then, to the infinite disgust of the colonel's wife, he shut—yes, slammed—the door.

A quarter of an hour later, in close arrest, Lieutenant Winn returned to his own roof and locked himself in his den. Mrs. Winn, kneeling at the keyhole, pleaded ten minutes for admission, all in vain; then she sent her maid for Dr. Collabone and Mrs. Faulkner, and went straightway to bed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THREE days more, and back came Mullane with the wretched prisoner Marsden. The Irish captain's eyes grew saucer-big when he heard the harrowing details of recent events at the post. Never in its liveliest days, before or since, had Worth known an excitement to match this; for, with the best intentions in the world, there wasn't a woman in officers' row who could get at the bottom facts of the episode. Rumors of the wildest kind that were early in circulation were best left to the imagination of the reader. The only thing actually known was that Mrs. Winn and Captain Barclay were going out riding at reveille, that Winn surprised them and knocked the captain down, that Winn was now in close arrest, Barclay on the mend and again sitting up, Mrs. Winn confined by illness to her bed, Mrs. Faulkner (a most important person she) in devoted attendance, all their differences forgiven if not forgotten,—and there were few Mrs. Faulkner would not have forgiven for the bliss of being for the time the most sought-after woman at Worth, for every one wanted to know how Mrs.

Winn was every hour of the day, and hoped to hear what dreadful imprudence of hers it was that caused the equally dreadful fracas.

Gravely and quietly the doctors told their story to the colonel; that there was no arrangement or engagement to ride together; that Captain Barclay had no idea Mrs. Winn ever rose—much less rode—that early; and most men accepted the statement as true. But there was the fatal exhibition of Barclay's letter by Mrs. Winn to confront the women, who would have held him guiltless and saddled all the blame upon her lovely, sloping shoulders. What had he to write to her about, unless it was to ask her to ride or something of the kind? And the idea of their daring to select such an hour, instead of going out when—when people could see! And then there was the fact that Mr. Winn still refused to be reconciled to his wife. What did that mean, if not that he deemed her guilty? Blythe, who had a kindlier feeling for Winn than had most men at Worth (for Brayton now was utterly set against him and refused to go near him), sent in his card and begged to be allowed to see him; and Blythe's face was sad and gray when, half an hour later, he came forth again.

"Colonel," said he to Frazier, "something has got to be done for that poor fellow, or he'll go

mad. Collabone has told him Barclay was totally ignorant of Mrs. Winn's plan to ride that morning,—that his assault was utterly unjustifiable; and between that and the contemplation of his wife's brainless freak, and all his old trouble, I'm sorely afraid he'll break down,—go all to pieces. Can't something be done?"

Both Frazier and Brooks thought something ought to be done; and so said Blythe and De Lancy, and Follansbee and Fellows, when they came trooping home, empty-handed, from their scout. Only Mullane's detachment had accomplished anything, and such success as he had was due almost entirely to Winn's persistent effort and energetic trailing. Something was being done to hunt up stolen stores as revealed by Marsden, but poor Winn, who had ridden home so full of hope and pluck and energy, now paced his narrow room for hours, or lay upon his lounge, face buried in his arms, either dull and apathetic or smarting with agony. On Mrs. Winn old Collabone had little sympathy to waste. Bluntly he told her that she was responsible for the whole business and deserved to be down sick. So, too, he told the colonel, who was having a blissful time answering the questions and squirming under the nagging of his household at home. At first Laura had shown tremendous spirit. Mr.

Winn's conduct was an insult. The doctor's comments were an insult. The instant she was well enough to move she would take her precious child and return to her mother's roof.

"Your mother hasn't any roof," said Collabone. "She's boarding in Washington, playing for another husband, and you'd spoil the whole game, turning up with a grandchild. What you've got to do is beg your husband's pardon for all the scrapes you've led him into,—this last one especially." Laura wailed and wept and cried out against the heartless cruelty of her husband, who left her sick and dying, for all he knew (Collabone had assured him there was nothing on earth the matter but nerves), and she thought Mrs. Faulkner ought to *make* him hear how ill she was. At last she managed to have herself appropriately arrayed, and with face of meekest suffering waylaid him on the lower floor before he could close the door against her, after a brief official visit from the adjutant.

But the first glance into his haggard, hopeless face, the sight of despair such as she had never dreamed of, struck to her soul something like terror. One moment she gazed, all thought of her puny troubles vanished and forgotten, and then with one great cry—the first genuine feeling she had shown—the unhappy woman threw herself at

his feet and clasped her arms about his trembling knees.

That night when the doctor called he found her humbled, contrite, concerned in earnest, and all for her husband. "It's the first time," said he, "I've ever felt any respect for you whatever, Mrs. Winn. I believe there's something in you, after all,"—"though probably not much," he later added when he told his wife. That night, too, he and Brooks and Blythe sat half an hour with Winn. The colonel asked them to do it, for it was time to help him if help was to come at all. The same day brought inquiry from Department Head-Quarters as to whether Lieutenant Winn had made good the amount of that great shortage; and the promised money package had not come.

Gently they asked him if he had reasonable right to look for it, and all the answer he could make was that it had been promised on certain conditions. He had recently accepted them, had expected to find the money on his arrival at Worth, but instead had found—— and the hands thrown hopelessly forward, palms upraised, were as expressive as any words could have been. There was silence a moment. Then he spoke again.

"And, after all, what matters it now? With

this court-martial hanging over me, I've nothing but dismissal from the army to look forward to in any event."

"And what if there should be no trial, Winn?" said the major, after a reflective pause. "It is true that you have made an awful—break; but as yet you are your only accuser, and Mrs. Winn is the only witness, for Barclay is dumb."

But Winn shook his head. "I know enough of army matters to know that this thing is all over the post and will soon be all over Texas. If Captain Barclay was of—the old army,—if he had been brought up as I was, we might settle it out of court. My father used to say that there could be no other reparation for a blow. What would my apologies be worth? They would not re-establish him."

"Sometimes I think," said Brooks, after another reflective pause, "that men of Barclay's stamp need no appeal to the code to set them right. That is only a device by which physical courage is made a substitute for other virtues that may be lacking. Barclay occupies a plane above it. In view of his record in the Platte country and in this recent chase after the outlaws, it would take a bold man to sneer at him, in this garrison at least; and if he prefer no charge against you, who is to do it? This trouble can be straightened

out, Winn," said the major, soothingly, "if only you could fix—that other."

But how, said they to each other, as they went gloomily away, was that other to be "fixed"? How was a poor fellow with nothing but his pay, burdened by an extravagant and helpless wife, a little child, and a number of debts, to hope to raise three thousand dollars to prevent the almost total stoppage of his stipend? That evening when Mrs. Faulkner left her invalid friend the latter asked her to say to Harry that she begged him to come and speak with her. Harry went, but there was no spring, no gladness, in the slow and halting feet that climbed the narrow stair; there was no hope in the care-worn face that came forth again in half an hour. Laura wished him to take her watch, her diamond ear-rings, a locket he had given her in bygone days, and other pretty trinkets, sell them, and pay their debts: she was amazed to hear, not that they owed so much, but that her treasures would bring so little.

The fourth day of his arrest was well-nigh gone. Collabone had reported Barclay quite himself again, and sitting up, though none too strong, and then he saw that Winn at last had been writing. "Read that," said Harry, briefly, and handed him the sheet. It was addressed to Captain Barclay.

"In the last four days I have done nothing but

think of the great wrong I did you. I have tried to find words in which to tell you my distress and self-reproach, but they fail me. There was no shadow of justification for my suspicion, and therefore no excuse for my blow. Had you desired reparation you would have demanded it, and the rule used to be for a man in my plight to wait until it was asked before he tendered an apology that might be considered a stopper to a challenge. But I will not wait. At the risk of anything any man may say or think, I write this to tell you that I deplore my conduct and with all my heart to beg your pardon."

Collabone went through it twice with blinking eyes. "That's the bravest thing you ever did, Winn," said he, as he laid it carefully down. "That ought to stop court-martial proceedings."

"That," answered Winn, "is a different matter. I don't ask any mercy. I would have been better off this minute if he or Brayton had shot me on the spot."

There was silence a moment as he turned away and presently seated himself at the little table, his head dropping forward on his arms. Then Collabone stepped up and placed a hand upon his shoulder.

"Winn, my boy, I should lie if I said you ought not to feel this, but there's such a thing as brood-

ing too much. You'll harm yourself if you go on like this. You—— Here! let me take that in to Barclay. Let him speak for me; I'm damned if it isn't too much for me!"

But Winn's head was never lifted as the doctor went his way.

Later that night the post adjutant dropped in. He and Winn had never been on cordial terms, but the staff officer was shocked and troubled at the increasing ravages in the once proud and handsome face of the cavalryman. "Winn," he said, in courteous tone, "the colonel directs extension of your limits to include the parade, and—and to visit Captain Barclay, who wants to see you this evening, if you feel able. It's only next door, you know," he added, vaguely. Then, "Isn't there anything I can do?"

That night just after taps old Hannibal admitted the tall young officer, and ushered him into a brightly lighted room, where, rather pale and wan, but with a kindly smile on his face, Galahad Barclay lay back in his reclining chair, and held out a thin, white hand.

"Welcome, Winn," was all he said, and then the old negro slid out and closed the door.

"There are Oirish and Oirish," as, quoting Mulvaney, has been said before. Once assured

that no further proceedings were to be taken against him for his iniquitous lapse the day of the rush to Crockett Springs, Captain Mullane concluded that he must stand high in favor at court and that further self-denial and abstinence were uncalled for, especially in view of the successes achieved for him by the small detachment of his party led by Lieutenant Winn. Mullane was a gallant soldier in the field, from sheer love of fighting, and the same trait when warmed by whiskey made him a nuisance in garrison. Not a week was he home from his successful scout when he broke out in a new place, and this time he found instant accommodation.

Little of the stolen property was recovered by the searching squad sent out as the result of Marsden's revelations. That voluble scoundrel was in the guard-house, awaiting trial by general court-martial. Cavalry drills were resumed again, and after each morning's work the officers gathered in considerable force at the club-room. There had been, both in the infantry and in the cavalry, vast speculation as to the outcome of Winn's arrest and Barclay's mishap. But men, as a rule, spoke of the matter with bated breath. Mullane, Bralligan, and the one or two Irish ex-sergeants in the command, known locally as the Faugh-a-Ballaghs, however, waxed hilariously in-

solent in their comments. Nothing short of dismissal should be Winn's sentence, and nothing short of a challenge be Barclay's course. It was with something akin to amaze that Mullane received on the sixth day after Winn's arrest official notification of his release and restoration to duty. It was with something akin to incredulous wrath that an hour later he caught sight of the liberated lieutenant issuing from Barclay's quarters, not his own, and with Barclay leaning trustfully on his arm.

Apology accepted! Explanations tendered! All settled, and without a meeting on the field of honor! "Whurroo! but hwat's the cavalry comin' to?" howled Mullane over the consequent cups at the sutler's store and club-room, Fuller aiding and abetting with more liquor. Up the hill to the post lurched the big captain that very afternoon, and into the card-room where some of his cronies were gathered, Bralligan among them, and the untrustworthy Hodge. Any one with half an eye could see there was mischief in the wind, for nothing caused these old-time Hibernian rankers keener suffering than to have their betters settle a question without either court-martial or a fight. Talk and jeering laugh grew louder as potations followed on the heel-taps of their predecessors. The mail from San Antonio got in at

five P.M. that evening, and the orderly was distributing letters as the officers returned from stables. Winn, by invitation, had accompanied the major, and was walking home with him, Mullane and a crony or two following at safe distance. Several men saw the light of relief in Winn's face as he received, opened, and glanced into the missive handed him.

"Has it come?" asked Brooks, in genuine sympathy.

"Yes," answered Winn, almost solemnly. "A check which I am instructed to have cashed by Fuller, as he has all the currency in the county just now."

"I congratulate you with all my heart," said the major. "I suppose you will see Trott to-morrow."

"I shall see him to-night, if you will excuse me, sir. I'll go at once to the store.—Brayton, will you come with me?"

Fuller was out. It was some minutes before he could be found at the corral. Meantime the two classmates, reconciled since the long talk between Barclay and Winn, conversed in low, grave tones in Fuller's private card-room, where none but officers and his cronies were admitted. "The trader looked queer," said Brayton, "when he took the check," but after some fumbling at his

safe came back with a thick package of treasury notes, carefully counted out and labelled. On this display of wealth gloated the fishy eyes of Mullane as a moment later he came reeling in, Bralligan and Hodge at his heels.

To his hilarious salutation Brayton gave short answer, Winn none at all. Winn's face had clouded again, and all the sad lines of thought and care seemed cutting deep, despite the coming of this much-needed relief.

"Hwat's ahl the lucre, I say?" shouted the Irish captain, raging at Winn's tacit snub. "Thousands of dollars, bedad!" Then with leering wink he turned to his half-muddled satellites. "D'ye mind, lads?—ahl that for a plasther to wounded honor,—regular John Bull business over again. That's the English way of settlin' a crim. con. case. How much did Barclay think it wurrth, Winn?"

And the next instant he lay floundering on the floor, felled by a furious blow from the subaltern's fist.

CHAPTER XVII.

Another week opened. In honor of Captain Barclay's restoration to health, the Fraziers had issued invitations for a picnic to the White Gate. Many of the officers and ladies had accepted. Most of them had been bidden. Captain Mullane had been on sick report four days,—contusions resulting from tumbling from a broken-legged chair, was the explanation; but every Pat in the command had his tongue in his cheek when he spoke of it, and of matters growing out of the "contusions" mentioned. Frazier had heard rumors of the former fracas, and had notified Messrs. Mullane, Bralligan, *et al.* that he would have no duelling in his bailiwick; and deep was the mystery surrounding certain consultations held by night in Mullane's quarters.

"The blood of that young braggart be on his own head," said Mullane to his henchmen. "And you, Hodge, can console the disconsolate widow."

He had no more doubt of the issue of the contemplated combat, no more compunction in the matter, than had Thackeray's valiant and inimitable little Gascon, *né* Cabasse, in his duel

with Lord Kew. He had long been the leader of the Hibernian set, and, despite every effort on the part of the witnesses to the affray at the sutler's to keep the matter a secret, rumors got out, and the Faugh-a-Ballaghs knew their chief had been braved by that hated coxcomb Winn. Every one of them knew further that Mullane must have sent his demand for satisfaction, despite the fact that his "pistol oi," the right, had been damaged by the collision and was not yet in condition for effective service. Everybody who was in the secret knew that Mr. Winn had instantly accepted, naming Brayton as his second, pistols as the weapons, and suggesting his father's old duelling set, that had seen long years and some service in the old army, as proper to the occasion; the time and place, however, would necessarily depend on the victim of the knock-down blow. All Winn asked and urged was utter secrecy meantime.

To Mullane there was nothing in the episode over which to brood or worry. As dragoon sergeant in the old days, he had "winged his man" according to the methods described in "Charles O'Malley" and practised occasionally by his superiors in rank. He had known many a bar-room broil, and was at home with pistol, fists, or sabre, —no mean antagonist when not unsteadied by

liquor. He had now a chance of meeting on the field one of the set he secretly hated, "the snobocracy of the arrumy," and he meant to shoot the life out of Harry Winn if straight shooting would do it. That Winn had taken advantage of him and knocked him down when he was drunk was excuse sufficient for the crime he planned; that he had brought the blow upon himself by an insult ten times more brutal was a matter that concerned him not at all. He had no wife or child to worry about: Mrs. Mullane and the various progeny were old enough to look out for themselves, as indeed most of them had long been accustomed to do. Mullane thirsted for the coming meeting, and for the prominence its outcome would give him among all good soldiers all over Texas.

And as for Winn,—he who had come riding home from his successful scout barely a fortnight before, buoyant, hopeful, almost happy,—the change that had come over him was something all men saw and none could fully account for. Cashing the draft from the bank at San Antonio, he had now enough to take Trott's receipt in full for the value of the stolen stores, even to some recovered plunder, slightly damaged by rough handling and by rain. He would then still have some four hundred dollars, and he asked his wife

for certain bills that had been frequently coming to her accompanied by urgent demands. Laura said she had not kept them. Which ought to be paid first? he asked. Which had been longest outstanding? Laura's reply was that she did not know, but if he had got that money from San Antonio at last she ought to have some to send to Madame Chalmette. She positively had not a dinner-dress fit to be seen. Winn did not even glance at the open doors of a big closet, hung thick with costly gowns his wife had hardly worn at all, but that now, she said, were out of style. There were other matters to be thought of than dinner-gowns, he told her, gravely, and her face clouded at once. She had almost forgotten the troubles of the week gone by.

He went down to his den and sat there thinking. What ought he to do? what should he do with this money? Every cent of it would be swallowed up if he squared those commissary accounts and turned the balance into checks and sent it off to pay these bills, and then if Mullane's bullet sped true to its mark, what would there be to take Laura and the baby North? "Home" he dared not say. She had no home: Collabone's diagnosis of that situation was correct. Then, too, if Mullane's pistol did not fail him, there would be no way in which that mysterious friend

and beneficiary of his father's could ever be repaid. What right had he to use one cent of this money for any purpose whatever, when another day might be his last? Winn wished he still had the San Antonio check instead of these bulky packages of greenbacks. They were now locked up in Trott's safe, unbroken, pending action at Department Head-Quarters on the new schedule sent thither, based on the recovery of some of the damaged stores. He thought of it all as, long before gun-fire that morning, the black care of his life came and roused him from his fitful sleep and bade him face his daily, hourly torment. He had risen, and as he softly moved about the room, thoughtful for her, she slept on placidly as a happy child, soundly as slept the nurse and the little one in the adjoining room.

Donning his stable dress, he carried his boots into the hall and down the creaking stairs, and sat there, with solitary candle, at his desk, wearily jotting down inexorable figures. The dawn came stealing in the eastward window: from aloft a querulous little wail was uplifted on the stillness of the summer morning. There was no answering hush of loving, motherly voice. Laura could not stand wakeful nights. He tiptoed swiftly up again to rouse the nurse in case she too slept on, but he heard her hand beating

drowsy time on the coverlet, and the soothing "Shoo, shoo, shoo," with which she communicated her own heaviness to her little charge. Laura had turned uneasily, he saw as he peeped in at the open doorway, but again slept soundly, her lovely face now full turned towards him, half pillowed on the white and rounded arm he used to kiss with such rapture in the touch of his lips. Her white brow was shaded by the curling wealth of her soft, shining hair. The white eyelids drooped their long curving lashes over the rounded cheeks, faintly tinged with the rosy hue of youth and health. The exquisite lips, warm, delicately moulded, parted just enough to reveal the white, even, pearly teeth. The snowy, rounded throat and neck and shoulders were enhanced in their beauty by the filmy fabric of her gown, beneath which her full bosom slowly rose and fell in healthful respiration. How beautiful she was, how fair a picture of almost girlish innocence and freedom from all worldly dross or care! Even now, in the light of all the gradual revelation of her shallow, selfish vanity, the heart of the man yearned over and softened to her. If he had only realized,—if he had only known more of the world and life and duty other than mere soldier obligation, how different all might have been! What right had he to ask her to be his

wife? She should have wedded a man many years her senior,—one fitted to guide and direct her,—able to lavish luxury upon her. It wasn't all her fault that she had been so thoughtless, poor girl! What else had her mother been before her? What else could one expect of her? Would she miss him? he wondered. Not long,—not long, thank God! Beauty such as hers would soon win for her and baby home and comfort such as he could never give. That was all over. Something almost like a sob rose from his heart as he bent and softly touched with his lips the floating curl above her temple, then turned back to resume his work and reface his troubles. Thank God, Mullane's pistol would soon end them all and save him from the sin that was in his soul the day he took his own revolver with him. She was sleeping still when the morning gun shook the shutter of her window and he went forth to meet the sorrows of another day, as he had met those of the past,—alone.

The air was strangely still, yet the smoke from the kitchen chimneys back of the barracks settled downward about the adobe capping or drifted aimlessly along the roof-trees. Down in the stream-bed and over about the low bluffs of the farther shore, swallows and sand-martins were shooting and slanting about their nests in clamor-

ous, complaining gyration. The flag, run up to the topmast at the crack of the gun, hung limp and lifeless, without so much as a flutter. Away to the northwest, over the pine crests of the range, a belt of billowy cloud gleamed snow-white at their summits, but frowned dark and ominous underneath. Huge masses of cumulus, balloon-like, thrust distended cheeks to the morning kiss of the sun; but these were well down to the west. The orient and the zenith skies were fleckless. Over at the stables two four-mule teams were hitching in, and army-wagons were being laden with tentage, luncheon-baskets, ice, boxes of bottled beer, band instruments, and the like, all going ahead to the White Gate, while Frazier's bandsmen were to follow in another as soon as they had finished breakfast. Their duty would be to set up the tents, the dancing-pavilion, and the lunch-tables on the level green in a lovely dell a mile within the gates, and have everything in readiness against the coming of the joyous party from the post. It was planned to carry the women-folk and such men as couldn't ride in the available ambulances and spring wagons, while the cavaliers would canter along on horseback. They would lunch at one, dance, fish, and flirt through the afternoon hours, have a supplementary bite and beer towards five o'clock, and drive home-

ward before dark. "Captain Barclay, as the guest of honor," said Mrs. Frazier, would go with her and 'Manda in her own vehicle, a venerable surrey. The colonel would drive, and Miss Frazier, now withdrawn by a maternal order from the supposed competition, in order that 'Manda's charms might concentrate, was bidden to ride. Winn had no thought of going. Mrs. Frazier had no thought that it would be possible for him or Laura to go,—the latter being reported ill in bed,—and therefore had found it easier to comply with the colonel's dictum that they must be invited, and she did it by dropping in and bidding "Miss Purdy" say to her mistress that she had called to inquire for her, and was so sorry, so very sorry, that her illness would prevent her coming to the picnic, whereupon Laura herself had appeared in becoming *négligée* at the head of the stairs and smilingly assured the nonplussed lady that she was so much better she thought it really might do her good to go. But of this she said no word to Harry until, returning from stables at seven o'clock, he was surprised to find her up and dressing.

On the homeward way he had met Mr. Bralligan, whom he passed without recognition, but not without mental note of the unusual circumstance, Bralligan being a late riser, as a general

thing, and having no business at Barclay's quarters anyhow. Brayton awaited him on the piazza and drew his arm within his own.

"Mullane sends word that he'll be ready at sunrise to-morrow, Harry, and I have said we were ready any time."

But the young fellow's voice trembled a bit as he anxiously scanned his classmate's grave, solemn face. It couldn't be that Winn was weakening, losing his nerve. It couldn't be that. But had his trouble so weighed upon him that he really welcomed the possible coming of the end? Brayton's was a hard lot just now. Assiduously he was hiding from his own captain all indications of the forthcoming meeting. Somehow he felt that Barclay would not hesitate to disclose the project to the post commander, and then every cad in Texas would jeer and crow and say it was Winn and he who crawfished. Barclay had noted that Winn seemed avoiding him again, and spoke of it to Brayton, who answered that Winn was avoiding everybody: he was blue and depressed about his affairs.

"Yet I understood that he had received more than enough to settle those commissary accounts," said the captain.

"Oh, yes," answered Brayton, "but there are other matters." How could he tell Barclay that

he thought Winn's love and faith in his wife were dead and gone? How could he tell him that Winn would touch no dollar of the money until he had first met and satisfied another claim? Barclay's suspicions would have been aroused at once.

But Winn was having another trouble now. Laura had set her heart on going to the picnic, and for no other reason, she declared, than that she must show the women there was nothing amiss. If he and she, either or both, should fail to attend the Fraziers' entertainment, every one would say he still believed her guilty of having a rendezvous with Barclay at that unearthly hour, and that she was unforgiving.

As he had done many a time before, Winn yielded. What mattered it? There might be only that day for him. He could accomplish nothing by absenting himself. He could aid in brushing away any cloud upon her name by going and being devoted to her. So go they did, and women who watched with wary and suspicious eyes long remembered how fond and lover-like were Winn's attentions to his beautiful wife; how often on the way he rode to the side of that ambulance to say some little word to her; how anxiously he seemed to scan that lowering westward sky, for by the time they reached the Blanca

gorge the cloud-banks were climbing to the zenith and the westward heavens were black as the cinder-patches along the heights about them, where fir and spruce and stunted pine had strewn the slopes with dry, resinous carpet, too easily ignited by the sparks from hunter's pipe or camp-fire. At two o'clock, Blythe, Brooks, and Frazier, clambering a rocky ridge to the southeast of the lovely picnic cove, looked gravely at the blackening sky, then gravely into one another's faces. "I think we ought to start at once," said the colonel. "That's no place to be caught in a storm." And he pointed downward as he spoke.

At their feet was the deep, grassy valley, hemmed by precipitous bluffs. The greensward at the base of the barrier ridge was soft and velvety. A richer soil nourished the roots of the bunch-grass, and all men knew that more than once in bygone days the sudden swelling of the brawling waters that came foaming and swirling down the ravine from the depths of the crested heights within had turned that beautiful little sheltered nook into a deep lake that slowly emptied itself through the narrow, twisting, rocky gorge that ended at the White Gate. On the level turf the dancers were merrily footing it even now to the music of an inspiring quadrille, the pretty gowns of the women, the uniforms of

the men, adding brightness to the picture. Below the camp the mules and horses were placidly grazing close by the inner opening of the gorge, the white covers of the wagons and the snowy canvas of the two or three tents adding to the picturesqueness of the scene. All at the feet of the watching group was life, laughter, and careless joy; all beyond that merry scene a black and ominous heaven, frowning down on gloomy pine and rocky hill-side. The ceaseless clamor of the seething waters, as they turned whirling into the tortuous gorge, rose steadily above the throb and thrill of the dance-music, and aloft those relentless clouds sailed sternly eastward over the sky.

Still the smoke from the camp-fires settled back and shrank about the earth, as though dreading the encounter with the sleeping forces of the air. Then, as the watchful eyes of the elders turned once more up the mountain side, there came a cry from Brooks. "By God! it's coming! There isn't a second to lose!"

Frazier, following the direction of that pointing finger, looked upward, saw the crestward firs and pines and cedars bending, quivering before a blast as yet unfelt below, saw sheets of ashen vapor come sailing over the hill-tops and sweeping down the rocky sides, saw the whole mountain face turn black as in a single minute, as

though hiding from the storm that came roaring down the slope, then lighting up the next instant in dazzling, purplish glare, as a zigzag bolt of lightning ripped the storm-cloud in twain, and in the instant, with crash and roar as of a thousand cannon rolled into one, let loose the deluge sleeping in its depths. As though Niagara were suddenly turned upon the hill-side, a vast volume of water swept downward, hissing, foaming, rolling over the rocks, and the leaping spray dashed high in air, as the black wealth of waters came surging down into the ravine.

"A cloud-burst, by all that's holy!" screamed Brooks, as he sprang down the grassy side of the bluff. "Up with you, up the hill-side, for your lives!" The dancers, faltering through the sudden flutter of the band, for the first time looked upward, and saw the peril. Then, men and women, bandsmen and "strikers," the camp made a wild rush up the eastward hill-side. Another blinding flash, another thunderous roar that seemed to shake and loosen the rocks about them, and in that second of brilliant, dazzling glare the watchers could see the white wall of the Blanca come spray-tossing, seething, whirling huge logs and trees on its outermost wave, tumbling them end over end, now deep-engulfed, now high in air,—one immense, furious moving mountain of

raging water, sweeping towards them from the depths of the chasm. Then, rolling and frothing over its puny banks in the valley below, a chocolate flood, foam-crested, spread right and left through the deserted camp, licking up the cook-fires, sweeping camp-chairs and tables off their legs, bodily lifting wagons and ambulances and sending them waltzing to the wild music of the storm over the flats where twinkled dainty-slippered feet the moment before, then bore them away towards the inner mouth of the gorge just in time to mix them up with such frantically struggling mules as through native obstinacy had resisted the impulse to scamper to higher ground while yet there was time. Worst sight of all, right there in the midst of the logs, chairs, wagon-beds, that came swirling beneath them, was a despairing woman's struggling form, revealed by a woman's white dress.

"Merciful God!" shrieked Mrs. Faulkner; "it's Laura Winn. She went up towards the falls not ten minutes ago."

Vain fool! What could have been her object? Barclay, never dancing, had been looking smilingly on. Both the Frazier girls had been led, not too willing, away by partners. Four sets had been formed, and Mrs. Winn, pleading fatigue, had asked to be excused, had sauntered past Bar-

clay's seat, and, before his eyes, had turned up the narrow, winding, sheltered pathway by the Blanca. Had she dreamed it possible that he would follow? Follow her he did not. Was it—a far more charitable thought—in search of Harry she had gone? Sombre and absent-minded, he had earlier slipped away among the trees, avoiding even Brayton. But now Barclay was seen on the near side of the torrent, limping up and along the steep slope, in imminent danger of slipping in, swinging in his hand a long lariat that he had drawn from the nearest wagon when the wild up-hill fight began. They remembered later that he was the last man out of the hollow. Already Brooks, Brayton, De Lancy, and half a dozen men were hurrying along the hill-side to aid, but Brayton reached him first and seized his arm just as another cry went up from the hill-top,—just as from the opposite side of the seething torrent the tall figure of Harry Winn came bounding through the stunted trees, and, hatless, wild-eyed, he seemed searching the tossing mass of wreckage on the bosom of the waters. Another instant still a white hand was waved aloft in their midst; then a white arm encircling a log, a terror-stricken white face, all showed dimly one moment before again borne underneath, hidden by the yellow body of a whirling ambulance,

and in that one instant, far leaping, Winn plunged into the torrent and struck out savagely to reach his wife.

Vain, hopeless effort! Eddying in huge circle at the rocky shoulder just above the entrance to the gorge, the wild waters near the eastward shore bore their burden, jarring and crushing, close under the heights on which were clustered the panic-stricken revellers from Fort Worth. But on the farther side, as it narrowed towards the entrance, the hissing torrent tore like a mill-horse on its way. Into this heaving flood leaped Winn, and, before the eyes of screaming women and helpless, horror-stricken men, was sucked into the rush and whirl of foaming waves sweeping resistless through the rocky cañon, away towards the fair White Gate, away out and beyond the lovely foot-hills, tossed and battered and crushed by whirling logs, dragged under by the branches of uprooted trees, borne away at last, rolling, gasping, still feebly, faintly struggling, until on the broad lowlands the torrent spent the fury of its concentrated spite, and, swiftly still, but no longer raging as when curbed and held by the barrier gate, the Blanca foamed away to strew the tokens of the fearful storm right and left for miles along its banks, and to land all that was mortal of Harry Winn, bruised, battered, yet

so placid in death that strong men's voices broke when telling how they found him, resting with weary head upon his arm on the sandy flat that lay just beneath the little summer-house on the overhanging bluffs,—just where Laura had looked down over the misty shallows from that very height the morning her soldier husband had reached his home at reveille and found her—wanting.

They bore her wailing home that night, widowed and crying, Woe is me! yet with what wild thoughts throbbing through her brain! Who was it that came leaping to her aid as she felt herself again dragged under in that swirling eddy? Whose voice was it that rang upon her drowning ears? Whose strong arms had clasped and sustained her and held her head above water, while other strong hands, hauling at the lariat made fast about his waist, drew them steadily to shore? Then angels came and ministered to her,—the women,—while the men clustered about her dripping hero, Galahad. Only for a moment, though, for there was mounting bareback in hot haste and thundering away at mad gallop, despite the drenching rain, for he who had saved the wife implored those who could ride to haste and save the husband.

All Fort Worth again went into mourning

with the setting of that woful sun. It had borne its fill and more of battle and of sudden death.

And people resurrected Hodge's stories later on, though Hodge himself was readily excused. They recalled how Channing's widow and little ones were cared for after that officer's untimely death in the shadows of old Laramie Peak. They recalled Porter's ailing wife and the sea-side sojourn, and the old ordnance sergeant's family burned out at Sanders. It wasn't many days before the lovely, drooping widow of poor Harry Winn was quite well enough to be sent the long journey to the North; yet some weeks elapsed before she would consent, she said, to be torn from her beloved's grave. When, gently as possible, she was told in July that the quarters she still occupied were needed for her husband's successor, she proposed to spend a few weeks with Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner, but they were forced to limit that visit to a few days. There was no reason why she could not have started in June, for that devoted mother, Mrs. Waite, had dropped temporarily the pursuit of Senators and Representatives in Congress assembled, and wired that she would meet her daughter in New Orleans, and the commanding general at San Antonio notified her that abundant means for all her homeward journey-

ing for self and nurse and baby were in his hands. She thought she ought to stay until all poor Harry's affairs were straightened out; and Frazier had to say that that, too, was all attended to. Yet all the while she seemed to think that she could not sufficiently thank the heroic Captain Barclay, and begged to see him for that purpose, also to consult him, day after day, until—was there collusion?—he suddenly received orders to proceed to San Antonio on court-martial duty, and was on his way before she knew it,—before, said the Fraziers, she could get ready to go with him. Nor was he there when she passed through, under Fuller's escort, to the Gulf, nor did she see him once again in Texas. Letters, fervently grateful letters, came to him from Washington, whither she had flitted, and where, it is reported, she was to have a clerkship. But when people spoke of her to Barclay he smiled gravely and had nothing to say. All her late husband's accounts were declared settled and closed within a very few months, and all men knew by that time whose hand it was that had lifted the burden; yet Laura Waite had lost the last vestige of her power where Galbraith Barclay was concerned.

Long before the fall set in, Barclay returned to his post of duty, eagerly welcomed by officers and men, except the Faugh-a-Ballaghs. Some-

body had sent from San Antonio a marble headstone for Winn's lonely grave in the little cemetery. Somebody had secured for his widow that clerkship in the Treasury Department, which within another year she left to wed a veteran admirer of her mother, to the unappeasable wrath of that well-preserved matron and the secret joy of 'Manda Frazier, who thought that now perhaps the eyes of Galahad would open to her own many charms of mind and person. Yet they did not. Somebody in a childish, sprawling hand was writing letters every week to the doughboy trooper, who by that time had the best drilled company at Worth, owing, said the Faugh-a-Ballaghs, when forced to admit the fact, to Brayton's abilities and to an Irish sergeant. Barclay's weekly mail was bigger than that of anybody else except the commanding officer, whose missives, however, were mainly official, and the number of letters penned in feminine or childish hands seemed, like Galahad's godchildren, ever on the increase. Mrs. Blythe came back from leave, bonnier than ever, and blissful beyond compare in the possession of secrets she could not share with even her oldest cronies, yet that leaked out in ways no man could hope to stop. Ned Lawrence's children were well, happy, thriving,—little Jim at Barclay's home with other godsons,

two or three, where a widowed sister cared for them as for her own, so said Mrs. Blythe when fairly cornered, while Ada was at a famous old Connecticut school not far from the Barclay homestead.

"Good heavens!" said Blythe, one day in late October, "these women have powers of divination that would be priceless at police head-quarters. Why, they've got hold of facts I thought only Mrs. Blythe and I knew,—facts that Barclay would have kept concealed from every one, but that we simply can't deny."

And so, little by little, the details of some, at least, of Galahad's benefactions became known, though no man knew how many more were held in reserve. For three long years he lived his simple, studious, dutiful life at Worth, a man the soldiers and their wives and children learned to love and look up to as their model of all that was kind and humane (they well-nigh worshipped him at Christmas times),—a man his brother officers of the better class honored as friend and comrade, worth their whole trust and esteem, and from the armor of whose reserve and tolerance the shafts of the envious and malicious glanced harmless into empty air.

There were women, old and young, who thought him lacking in more ways than one. The

Fraziers said not much, but looked unutterable things when they went North on leave and people asked for Galahad. It was a family tradition that he had treated 'Manda very badly; that is, mamma said as much, but the elder sister had views of her own not entirely in harmony with those of her beloved parent. 'Manda herself found consolation by marrying in the army not two years later, and her husband thinks to this very day that Barclay, with all his wealth, secretly envies him his treasure, though admitting, in those lucid intervals to which so many lords are subject, that perhaps Barclay wasn't so confoundedly unlucky after all. It was at their quarters some years later still, at a far-distant post, that in the course of an evening's call, in company with his host, Lieutenant-Colonel Brooks, the chronicler of a portion, at least, of this episode of old-time army life was favored with the most important facts of all.

"What do you think!" said the stout possessor of Mrs. 'Manda's matured and rounded charms, as he came bustling in with the *Army and Navy* in his hand, "Galahad Barclay's married at last. Here it is: To Ada, only daughter of the late Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Lawrence, —th U. S. Cavalry."

"Ada Lawrence! That child!" screamed

madame, with eyes and drawl expansive. "Well, of all——"

But others, who have seen her in her happy wifehood, declare that Ada Lawrence grew up to be one of the loveliest of the lovely girls that married in the army,—and they are legion.

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